



## THE MAN OF NAZARETH



# THE MAN OF NAZARETH

A Study in Personality

BY

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TO  
MY WIFE



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## PREFACE

As he surrenders himself to the Gospel story, there grows upon the mind of the reader a haunting impression of a living presence moving through the whole story and speaking in the authentic tones of reality ; an impression which gathers and takes shape before his eyes until it resolves itself into the features of a personality, alive, arresting, and intensely original.

It is the personality so discovered by himself in the Gospel records that the writer has attempted to describe in these pages. The limitations of such a method of approach are too obvious to need more than a passing reference. It lays more stress on the question : Is this true to character ? than on the question : Does the historical evidence justify us in regarding these details as accurate in fact ? It assumes that the personality of Jesus would remain stamped on the memories of the disciples more clearly than anything else, and would be strong enough to shine through their natural prejudices and limitations. But while this method cannot be a substitute for critical inquiry, it is an invaluable supplement to it. The study of historical environment, including contemporary thought and opinion, is never of itself sufficient to account for genius ; still less can it be made a " bed of Procrustes " to which genius must be fitted, and forbid us to believe in anything that transcends its own thumb-rule.

As no critical discussion is possible in this book, I wish to emphasise the tentative nature of much of the reconstruction attempted throughout. Certainty about detail is often unattainable; it is still more often exceedingly difficult to decide between alternative possibilities. The history of the Messianic hope, the meaning of the Temptation story, and the reasons for the last Journey are in particular subjects bristling with difficult and controversial questions, and the view taken here is only one of many possible. These interpretations are, of course, only intended to serve as suggestions; and if the book does not stimulate the members of study circles and others who may read it to go back to the original records and form their own opinions, it will have entirely failed in its purpose.

Discussion of such matters as the theological implications of Jesus' life and death, "miracle," and the adequacy of the picture of Pharisaism presented in the records, lies outside the scope of the book; they are only referred to in so far as they are embedded in the narrative. Discussion of the Resurrection and its consequences is also omitted, as belonging to another part of the Christian story.

In order that the reader may check the interpretation at every point, full references are given throughout. But as the value of any such interpretation can only be judged as a whole, I would suggest that the references should not be verified in detail at the first reading.

"Love" (when used in the Christian sense) is spelt with a capital L throughout. The intention is to remind the reader that this much-abused word should be given the significance which it had for Jesus. Unhappily it is now so frequently used

to dignify even the worst forms of sentimental abandonment that the very word is apt to rouse a sense of disgust. But this unstrung sentimentality has nothing in common with that "high heroic virtue" which was the Love of Jesus; a virtue which still retains its power to challenge and enthrall men with "its wonder and beauty and terror"; which still appals and humiliates us with its relentless demand for an incredible generosity and an impossible courage, and which yet makes all other ways of life seem poor and mean beside it.

My debts are too many and too obvious to specify in detail. In writing about the Gospels the the only form of originality that is now possible is originality in the sense of basing the interpretation on careful study of the original documents checked by the best critical results available. I have done my best to fulfil this elementary obligation. Mr. Basil Mathews and Miss I. Naylor (who prepared the manuscript for the press) have laid me under great personal obligations. To the Rev. J. S. Tucker, who first taught me the interest and value of such study, and to the Rev. Hugh Martin and the Rev. F. A. Cockin, who read through the MS., both in its longer and its present form, and have greatly improved it by invaluable criticisms and suggestions, I can offer no adequate acknowledgment. But they must not, of course, be held responsible for any opinions expressed here.

#### SYNOPSIS.

The scheme of the book is as follows :

*Part I.*—Part I is an attempt to explain briefly why the Messianic hope arose, what forms it took,

its importance in Jewish history, and why it was the most vital issue confronting Jesus.

*Part II.*—Part II aims at reconstructing the personality of Jesus as it is revealed to us (1) in His personal characteristics ; (2) in the workings of His mind ; (3) in His presentation of “ the Gospel ” ; (4) in the impression He made on His contemporaries.

*Part III.*—The character and message of Jesus having been thus placed against the contemporary “ Messianic ” background, Part III goes on to trace the general outline of His public career. Chapter I interprets the Baptism and Temptation stories as the call of Jesus to Messiahship and the rejection of all contemporary solutions of the Messianic problem in favour of His own Gospel.

Chapter II carries the story up to the final crisis at Cæsarea Philippi. It is admitted that the discrepancies between the order of events as given in the different records, and the synoptists’ habit of collecting incidents and sayings into convenient groups (often placing them in different contexts) makes it impossible to reconstruct the historical sequence of events with any degree of accuracy or certainty. But it is suggested that the development of the general situation does make it possible to understand the reason for the more important steps reported to have been taken by Jesus.

The general situation is then outlined with particular reference to (a) the growing opposition of the religious leaders ; (b) Jesus’ popularity, its dangers, and His efforts to avoid it. It being

incredible that Jesus should have acquiesced in the failure of His life-work through these two causes, it is argued that He must have taken measures to meet the growing crisis; and that the traditions recording a "Sermon on the Mount," the use of the parable form of teaching, the choosing and "Mission" of the Twelve, and the retirement with the Twelve, first to the region of Tyre and Sidon and then to Cæsarea—can all be explained as such steps.

Chapter III analyses the situation as it probably presented itself to Jesus at this final crisis, in order to ascertain if possible why He should have determined to go to Jerusalem and challenge His enemies there, with the certain prospect of being put to death as a result. It then follows the narrative (now far more detailed and coherent) up to the Crucifixion, and argues that Jesus' purpose was not defeated by that event, but on the contrary was achieved through it.

The digression on "the Last Things" may seem unduly long. But the passage raises the whole problem of eschatology in the Gospels; and there are three reasons which make it obligatory to deal with the problem frankly and fully: eschatology is now recognised to be a question of cardinal importance; it is particularly important in a book which gives a central place to the Messianic hope in the Gospel story; and the interpretation of the third temptation offered in the text is clearly inconsistent with the most obvious interpretation of the meaning of "the Second Coming." It will, I hope, become clear in the course of the book that the crux of the matter seems to me to lie not merely, as Schweitzer asserts, in the inconsistency



of "liberal Christianity" with the eschatology of "primitive Christianity," but in the far more radical inconsistency between that eschatology and Jesus' conception of God. If that is so there is need to insist further on its vital importance.

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**PART I**  
**THE BACKGROUND**



## CHAPTER I

### THE EARLY HISTORY OF THE "MESSIANIC" HOPE

[*Note.*—The word "Messianic" is here used in the later and special sense, to include all the hopes and beliefs attached to the future "Kingdom" or "Reign" of God which the Jews expected God to introduce by intervening in human life, and the sometimes human, sometimes half-divine figure through whose agency many of them believed that God would act. There is no other inclusive term. To avoid confusion the word has been placed in inverted commas except where it refers to the personal Messiah. Accurately speaking, however, Messiah only means "The Anointed," and could be used of any consecrated priest or king, or even of a "chosen" agent like Cyrus (e.g., Isa. xlv, 1; Ps. ii, 2); and though it was later confined to the meaning we now recognise, the actual interpretation of the Messiahship and the kingdom up to the end of our period fluctuated between a quite human and political on the one side and a superhuman and transcendent conception on the other. Many Jews did not look for a personal Messiah at all. No orthodox Jew has ever regarded the Messiah as in the full sense divine (God the Son). For the sake of clearness and brevity the main stress is here laid on the extremes, not the compromises.]

#### (I) *Introductory.*

NINETEEN hundred years ago, in a small district of an obscure Roman province, a village carpenter, who came of poor peasant stock, left his trade and began to travel through the villages that clustered round the Sea of Galilee, proclaiming himself to be the bearer of a new message from God.

The religious world of that day was full of unrest and vague expectation. The profound moral genius of the Jews, quickened by a series of national calamities, had become acutely conscious of the problem of the existence of evil in a world believed to be created by a supremely righteous God. Evil and suffering—above all, triumphant evil and unmerited suffering—are among the most universal and impressive facts of life: a problem as old as thought; and everywhere it is the finer minds who are most conscious of their existence and most oppressed by them. The facile answer of Ezekiel that wickedness is punished and suffering distributed in this present life according to individual merit had received drastic criticism at the hands of the author of Job, and had indeed broken down completely in face of the plain facts. On the other hand the religious experience of the Jewish race, culminating in that of the great prophets and seers, had made them increasingly conscious of the absolute "righteousness" of God and of His unconditional demand for perfect righteousness on the part of man. But the growth of this religious consciousness, far from solving the problem of pain and evil, only served to render it more acute. If God is "perfect in righteousness," how could this imperfect and evil world, in which unrighteousness triumphs and suffering is universal, have been created by Him? Indeed, this contrast between the goodness of God and the evil of His world is nowhere more sharply exposed than in the story of the great prophets themselves. The burden of their message was the moral perfection of God; and yet they one and all testify ceaselessly against the iniquity even of "God's people"—an iniquity

## *The Early History of the "Messianic" Hope* 5

of which their own sufferings on behalf of that message were the clearest proof. To this baffling contradiction in experience they could but oppose the faith that this present world did not correspond to the Divine Will; its condition must be due to the misuse by men of the power and freedom with which God had endowed them. And surely, in the fullness of time, God Himself would grant redress to His faithful servants and intervene to establish His reign on earth.

The history of Israel itself was no less bewildering. They had been chosen by God as "His own peculiar people" and entrusted with the Divine revelation of the Law. From far back in their story they had treasured mysterious promises of a unique destiny. They had been led by God Himself into "the promised land." For a time they had grown and prospered. Then they had gone from disaster to disaster, crushed between the upper millstone of the Western Empires and the nether millstone of Egypt. The Assyrians had laid waste their land and destroyed the "northern kingdom" of Israel. Babylon had taken the Judeans into captivity. The flower of their manhood was slain by the sword; their women and children made captive; the sacred city destroyed; the Temple of Jehovah desecrated (cf. e.g. Lam. v). The "remnant" who returned had escaped from subjection to one master only to fall into the hands of another, until at last the brief dawn of independence and hope under the earlier Maccabees had been finally extinguished by the advent of Rome.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Assyrians captured Samaria in 722 B.C.; the Babylonians, Jerusalem in 587 B.C.; the Jews remained subject to Persia till about 320 B.C.; from 320 to 198 B.C. under Egypt (the Ptolemies); from 198



And yet the prophets had never wavered in their heroic faith that, however overwhelming and brutal the might of the great powers to whom Israel was a mere pawn in the game of empire, nevertheless, in reality it was God Who was all-powerful and these nations but as "the dust in the balance" against Him (e.g. Isa. xl, 12-17). Before their piercing gaze the shifting pageant of the Empires faded like a dream, and behind it, clear and terrible, stood Jehovah of the Judgment (see, e.g., Hab. iii). And at His chosen hour, He would appear to redeem His promises (cf. Isa. xlii, 10-16).

But if the world were to be transformed, how and when would the change be brought about? There were two answers. The narrower religious patriotism of the race expressed itself in the belief that God would establish a great Jewish Kingdom which would rule over the earth in His name. But this method was essentially crude and superficial; it missed the real problem. Evil and suffering were too closely woven into the whole texture of life to be banished by physical force. And it was not long before more thoughtful minds became convinced that nothing short of the direct intervention of God Himself would avail to introduce a world in which His righteousness would be vindicated.

But however the Kingdom of God was conceived, the prevailing belief was that it would be ushered in on this earth. The consummation had, therefore, to be conceived as an actual historical event; and the mere effort to picture it as such began to reveal the inherent difficulty of imagining God as intro-

to about 140 B.C. under Syria (House of Seleucus); from then till 63 B.C. (when Pompey annexed Palestine to the Roman Empire) they were free under the Maccabees.

## *The Early History of the "Messianic" Hope* 7

ducing it "in person"; a difficulty which was yet further enhanced by an ancient tendency of Jewish thought to lay emphasis on the transcendence of God, until at length the very name of the Supreme Majesty became too awful to utter. And thus the belief took shape that this duty would be entrusted to a divine Representative, the Vicegerent of God, Who was known as His Messiah, and later as "the Son of Man."

These conceptions came to play a prominent part in the life of the nation. For the two most influential forces that moulded the character and shaped the fortunes of the Jewish people were a profound religious faith and an intense self-conscious patriotism. And the ultimate effect of their political no less than of their religious history was to heighten the importance of the "Messianic" hope among all classes of the people. It inspired the visions of their noblest prophets; it gave birth to a new form of literature; it focussed the most burning national aspirations. No later prophet who appealed to the future rather than the past could hope to win the allegiance of the nation to a *new* message unless he understood this faith and used its language. And thus any new message about God and His purpose for mankind that was to reach the heart of Jesus' contemporaries, would of necessity have to be expressed in "Messianic" terms. This fact was decisive in determining the form of Jesus' message and exercised a profound influence on the whole of His career. If, then, we are to obtain any real insight into His mind, it will be of advantage to study the history and meaning of this "Messianic" conception more closely.

(ii) *Forms of the "Messianic" Hope.*

The earliest form of the "Messianic" hope is reflected in the first prophetic writings: "The golden age was to be merely a period of material and unbroken prosperity which the nation was to enjoy when Jahweh overthrew Israel's national enemies."<sup>1</sup> This tradition was a survival of the times when Jehovah was the God of Israel only, and His fortunes bound up with those of the nation. With the rise of monotheism and the deepening of the prophetic experience, the crudeness of the conception was refined. Jehovah became the one supreme God of all the earth; His character as perfect in righteousness was established, and the picture of the new earthly Kingdom of the Lord became more morally satisfying. From this time on, the "Messianic" hope began to develop along two divergent lines. The first was the more genuinely religious conception of a Reign of God, which may be distinguished as the Kingdom of Heaven. The second was the popular conception of a worldwide Jewish Kingdom established by force of arms in the name of Jehovah, which may be called the national Kingdom. Historically speaking, the two conceptions were not clearly distinguished; but in fact they were, as Jesus at length made clear, essentially irreconcilable.

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.—About the period of the exile the development of this belief had reached the stage of a more or less spiritually conceived millennium, to be established on this earth by Divine intervention. There would eventually be a great judgment, "the Day of the Lord," brought

<sup>1</sup> R. H. Charles, *Between the Old and New Testaments*, p. 65.

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in either by God Himself or through a Divine Representative, "the Messiah." This faith found its noblest expression in the familiar pictures of the new world and its "Messianic" ruler so magnificently portrayed in the Drama of Redemption by the later Isaiah. Both the judgment and the salvation were for long conceived nationally, and even the great writers were not concerned with the fate of individuals; it was the national kingdom that was to be eternal, not the individuals who composed it. Only Israel—Israel purified, redeemed and faithful—was to be admitted to the Kingdom. But there was a growing tendency among the nobler minds to believe that heathen converts to the Jewish faith would be admitted as members of Israel, and to extend this hope more and more widely.

But during the exile the Jews were subjected to influences which led to changes of far-reaching importance. They were torn from their homes, dispersed and cut off from the Temple worship and its priests. They had to depend on their own local organisations for religious worship and instruction. They were isolated among a "heathen" population who regarded both them and their monotheistic, non-idolatrous religion with contempt, and they came into intimate personal contact with a great worldly Empire founded on force of arms. The Persians who restored them to liberty infected them, both for good and evil, with new religious ideas. This Persian religion appealed to the Jews because, like theirs, it was founded on a cosmic conception of the struggle between good and evil; and at the same time it introduced them to novel speculations about the fate of the individual, the

nature of angelic beings and the future of the universe. The result was a continual modification of the older Jewish beliefs.

After the return, the closing of the Bible "canon," in the time of Ezra, marked the end of the prophetic writings and the rise of another literature of a very different character. It also marked the victory of the belief which thereafter became the chief characteristic of the Jew—that in their Old Testament, above all in the Law (Pentateuch), they possessed the all-sufficient, divinely-inspired self-revelation of God, communicated once and for all to the Chosen Race. This was followed later by the development of Synagogue worship, the rise of the famous "parties" of the Pharisees and Sadducees, and the growth of Rabbinical lore. The majority of the Jews, however, never returned to Palestine, but remained in continual contact with the civilisations of the outer world (the "Gentiles") and the wider currents of thought.

The "Messianic" hope was affected mainly in two ways. Religion became individualised, with momentous consequences. A conception arose of a kingdom within man, the condition of entrance to which was personal righteousness; and the main emphasis tended to shift from national to individual responsibility and salvation. Not that the nationalist outlook was lost; but it was reinterpreted in the idea of a "Remnant," composed of the "Saints of the Most High" who would form the nucleus of the new Society or "Kingdom of God." This again led to a belief in the resurrection of all righteous individuals; for now that personal righteousness was the condition of entrance, it was natural to believe that "the Kingdom" would include

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all the righteous "men of God" who had lived in the past as well as those alive at its coming. They were to receive spiritual "bodies," and were to enter on a "blessed immortality." Moreover, though the "exclusive" tradition, that salvation was confined to the Jews, was carried on by the followers of Ezekiel and Ezra, the more liberal and progressive thinkers held firmly to the faith that Israel was to be the "spiritual Mother of the nations."

But now, accompanying the old beliefs, there begins to be audible a note of deepening pessimism, a sense of the hopelessness of the present order—so corrupt and yet so powerful. This world was altogether too imperfect to be made into a worthy Kingdom of God. There must be "a new heaven and a new earth," the old being abolished. Nor did thought stop there. Heaven itself must be the ultimate goal of the spirits of "the blessed"; the dead would await the resurrection in Paradise; and the millennium on the new earth would be a preparation for Heaven. Meanwhile God was only suffering the "brute" kingdoms of the earth to survive until His time was fulfilled; then would come the End, not in a great earthly ruler, not through political supremacy—the victorious march of evil had gone too far for that—but in the Last Judgment itself. Men turned from their despair to dwell more and more on that august vision. It thrilled them with the sense of the Majesty and Power of God, and present humiliation and misery could be forgotten in the coming triumph over their enemies.

**THE NATIONAL KINGDOM AND THE WARRIOR MESSIAH.**—But more ordinary minds were in-

capable of living on the heights reached by the prophet, or in the visionary world of Apocalyptic. Side by side with the more progressive thought the old belief in a national Kingdom maintained its hold on the people. In fact, even in the greatest of the prophetic writings there occur descriptions of a great battle at which all the kings of the earth are to combine against Israel and be utterly overthrown by the intervention of Jehovah (e.g. Zech. xiv; cf. Rev. xvi, 16). The masses were still clinging to this belief when Jerusalem was destroyed by Titus. For the establishment of such a Kingdom they naturally looked for a personal Messiah, a great human warrior who would—no doubt under the direct protection of God Himself—"go forth conquering and to conquer," and "rule the nations with a rod of iron" after giving the Jewish people lordship over the earth. For centuries it was expected that such a Messiah would arise from "the house and lineage of David." Amid the stress of feeling aroused by the persecution of Antiochus,<sup>1</sup> the appearance of the Maccabean princes as the national deliverers seemed to promise an almost immediate fulfilment of this expectation. The language used of these heroes in contemporary literature sometimes hovers so closely to the language of "Messianic" utterance, that it becomes difficult to distinguish between them. And it is significant that so long as they remained at the height of their greatness the Messiah's descent was by many traced no longer from the house of David, but from the house of Levi.<sup>2</sup> There is also

<sup>1</sup> 168 B.C. King of Syria.

<sup>2</sup> The Maccabees were of the House of Levi. The two beliefs were sometimes combined. The Messiah would be at once Priest and King.

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evidence in this literature that each one of the four great Maccabean leaders, Judas, Jonathan, Simeon and John Hyrcanus, was in turn hailed as the forerunner of the Messiah. In short, the people seemed to have hoped that the Messiah would be the immediate lineal descendant of these princes, would take over the work in which they were then actually engaged, complete their victories, conquer all their enemies, and so establish Jewish independence and over-lordship.

But in the event the promised Kingdom failed to materialise under any of the great Maccabean princes, and their successors proved unworthy and degenerate.

#### (iii) *Two Conceptions of Messiahship.*

The failure of the Maccabean hope had two consequences which produced an important effect on the society into which Jesus was born.

Though the conception of a Messiah of the house of Levi was abandoned, the hope itself was far too strong to die; it merely turned again to "the son of David." And the result of the Maccabean victories was that the people never forgot the nearness and intensity of that hope and remained in a state of suppressed excitement and expectation.

But the ruin of earthly hopes produced an altogether different effect on other minds. The disappointment only confirmed them in their distrust of human agency, and they turned again with passionate humility and longing to the belief in a Divine intervention. For it was about this time that there arose a new and remarkable conception in apocalyptic literature. This is the conception



found in the Book of Enoch<sup>1</sup> of a "Son of Man," who was to introduce the more supernatural "Messianic" Kingdom. Daniel's Son of Man probably represented righteous Israel, "the Saints of the Most High." "The new Son of Man is a person; he pre-existed from the beginning (Enoch xlvi, 2); he possesses universal dominion (lxii, 6); and all judgment is committed to him (lxix, 27). Four titles applied to him for the first time in literature are afterwards reproduced in the New Testament. These are: the Christ (xlvi, 10), the Righteous One (xxxviii, 2), the Elect One (xl, 5), and the Son of Man."<sup>2</sup> This Messianic Son of Man was to establish the Kingdom of God by a catastrophic intervention, accompanied by a great Judgment:

"Behold! He cometh with ten thousands of his holy ones  
To execute judgment upon all  
And to destroy the ungodly . . .  
And for all you sinners there shall be no salvation (i, 9).

"On that day mine Elect One shall sit on the Throne of Glory  
And shall try their works (xlv, 3).

"And he sat on the throne of His Glory  
And the sum of judgment was given unto the Son of Man" (lxix, 27).

Ungodly Jews as well as heathen were to be condemned to "eternal execration" and "the years of their life to perish" (i, 45). But

"The righteous shall be in the light of the sun  
And the elect in the light of eternal life . . .  
And there shall be peace to the righteous in the name of the  
Eternal Lord" (lviii, 3-5).

This figure has been described in some detail be-

<sup>1</sup> A collection of writings, probably compiled and edited early in the first century B.C.

<sup>2</sup> Charles, *Between the Old and New Testaments*, p. 85.

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cause the title assumed by Jesus Himself was not "Messiah," but "Son of Man."<sup>1</sup>

### *(iv) Prevalence of the Different Conceptions.*

The extant literature proves the existence of these several forms of the "Messianic" hope, and indicates the probable lines of their development. But the precise influence of each is far more difficult to estimate. Indeed, it would be contrary to all probability that the bulk of the people should have been as clear or consistent in their opinions as the more advanced or imaginative thinkers. Presumably men held these various beliefs in every sort of combination and even confusion. The masses seem undoubtedly to have expected a political "kingdom of our father David" and a human Messiah to introduce it. The Pharisees apparently used very much the same language, but interpreted it in more spiritual terms. More accurately, they combined the two conceptions; the establishment of a Jewish kingdom was to be in part preceded, in part followed, by a spiritual regeneration, led by the Messiah. And we may also reasonably suppose that at least the main ideas and language of the "apocalyptic" school were tolerably familiar to the ordinary Jew in the time of Jesus. They would make an obvious appeal to patriotic and racial feeling—as the frequent references to them in the literature of this and later periods prove. Moreover, without such an assumption it is difficult to account for their influence on the followers of Jesus; for the original disciples were not particularly well-educated men.

<sup>1</sup> For further description of the Son of Man and his duties see Section xxii, 9; xxvii, 23; xli, 2; xlv, 3; xlvii; xlviii; xlix, 27; liii, 1, 3-5.

Certainly the writings of our New Testament abundantly prove how eagerly the nation looked for a "Messianic" kingdom and how familiar was the conception of a personal Messiah. At the opening of Mark's gospel John the Baptist is hailed as the "Forerunner" of the Messiah, whose coming "to prepare the way of the Lord" was prophesied by Malachi (iii, 1) and Isaiah (xl, 3-5). And this idea occurs again in the first question asked by the disciples after the Transfiguration: "Why do the Scribes say that Elijah must come first?" (Mark ix, 11-13). According to Josephus, John was killed by Herod on account of his popularity (Jos., Ant. xviii, v 2). John was not a politician but a religious ascetic, and there is no evidence that he ever attempted to "rouse the people"; the fact that Herod killed such a man from such a motive is eloquent of the state of public feeling. John himself was mainly concerned with "the Coming One," "the Day" and its "Judgment" (Matt. iii, 5-12; Luke iii, 7-17, cf. John i, 19-28); and his message was summarised in the words: "Repent, for the Kingdom is at hand" (Matt. iii, 2). The universality of the Messianic hope forms the background to the "Magnificat" (Luke i, 46-56), the hymn of Zacharias (Luke i, 67-79), and the story of the shepherds (Luke ii, 8-20) and of the Magi (Matt. ii, 1-12); in all of these the coming of the Messiah is assumed as a matter of course, the only question being as to time and place. Simeon "was waiting for the Consolation of Israel" (Luke ii, 25); and Anna speaks of Jesus "to all those who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem" (Luke ii, 38). Joseph of Arimathea was one of those who were "expecting the Kingdom

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of God" (Mark xv, 43). The two disciples who were met by "the stranger" on the way to Emmaus "hoped that it was he (Jesus) who was to have been the Redeemer of Israel" (Luke xxiv, 21). After Jesus' death the main effort of the disciples to convince the Jews was directed to proving from the Old Testament that Jesus was the Messiah predicted in the Messianic prophecies. No question or doubt of the "Messianic" hope or of the certainty that a Messiah would come is so much as hinted at (cf. Acts ii, 16 f.; iii, 13 f.; iv, 10 f., 24 f.; v, 30 f.; v, 42; vi, 14; vii, 51-53; viii, 12; 30 f.; xi, 26; xiii, 13-41; xv, 15 f.; xvii, 2, 3, 11; xviii, 5, 28; xxvi, 22; xxviii, 23, etc.). The same attitude is reflected in Matthew's persistent attempt to find an Old Testament "Messianic" prophecy to fit every event of importance in Jesus' life (e.g., Matt. i, 22; ii, 17; iii, 3; iv, 14; viii, 17; xii, 17; xxi, 4; xxvii, 9). In the Fourth Gospel the Samaritan woman at Sychar says "I know that the Messiah is to come" (John iv, 25). There is an interesting dispute, recorded in the same Gospel, whether a man of Galilee could be the Messiah: "Has not the Scripture said that the Christ (Messiah) will come of the seed of David and from David's birthplace Bethlehem? Search and see, for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet" (cf. John i, 19, 41, 45, 49; iv, 42; vii, 25-50; ix, 22; xi, 27; xix, 7; xix, 24; 36-37, etc.). And not only the Gospels and Acts, but the whole New Testament turns on the Messiahship of Jesus. It is inconceivable that without such a contemporary "Messianic" background, Jesus would have been accepted immediately after His death as "the Messiah." For it remains a fact that the

Galilean peasant who was crucified as a common criminal was, after a brief interval of horror and despair, confidently and persistently proclaimed by His followers as "the Christ of God," who was coming back "to judge the quick and the dead." The bitter controversy that followed turned solely on His personal right to be given that title.

## CHAPTER II

### THE CLAIM OF JESUS

(i) *The "Messianic" hope in the time of Jesus.*

SUCH was the Jewish world into which Jesus was born. The most intense national and religious hopes had become crystallised round the "Messianic" expectation; and that expectation itself was becoming more and more centred on the advent of a personal Messiah. The individual prowess of the Maccabean princes had excited the hopes of a national kingdom to a state of feverish expectancy; while so human was the general conception of the Messiah that the people were continually on the point of identifying him with one or other of the heirs of the great Maccabean house. This popular conception was therefore one of the three great ideals of Messiahship with which Jesus was confronted.

At the other extreme were those Jews who were equally convinced of the reality and imminence of God's intervention, but who looked for a kingdom to be brought in not by force of arms but by a catastrophic intervention from Heaven. And this belief also had culminated in the hope of a personal Messiah, the Son of Man, which had found expression in the book of Enoch. This conception was the second great ideal of Messiahship with which Jesus was confronted.

No doubt these two extremes do not exhaust the beliefs held ; but other solutions differed only in appearance. For however much "the reign of the Son of David" might be idealised, however earnestly the peace and blessing of that reign, once it was established, might be dwelt upon, the question had at last to be faced : By what means was the Kingdom to be established over the malignant and powerful forces of this world ? The more mystical language of such answers as that given in the Psalms of Solomon : "He shall destroy the godless nations *with the word of his mouth* . . . he will rebuke the rulers and remove sinners by the might of his word" (Psalms of S. xvii, 27 ; 38-41 ; cf. Is. xi, 4) is nothing but the language of compromise ; the answer is really the same. For it also, like the first two conceptions, is in the last resort a reliance upon force ; and that force must be either the "physical" violence of the one, or the "spiritual" violence of the other.

There were in fact only three possible answers to the question how the kingdom was to be made a reality : by the direct intervention of God ; by war ; or by the persuasive and all-conquering appeal of a great spiritual revelation. It may be that a few of the most truly religious-minded of the race had caught a glimpse of this last ideal also. But whether they had seen it clearly or not, it was in fact the last of the three ideals of Messiahship confronting Jesus.

(ii) *Jesus' Interpretation of Messiahship.*

However they conceived of Him, the first pre-occupation of this Jewish world was "the living God." God was the absorbing pre-occupation of

Jesus also and His message was a revelation about God. His appeal was made directly to His own countrymen, and in particular to the masses from whom all His closest friends and followers were chosen and whom He loved with such whole-hearted and self-sacrificing devotion. But He could only speak intelligibly to such men in the language of their own conceptions. Moreover His method of teaching new truths was always to select the best current expression for them and then educate His followers to read into it His own meaning. Finally His own thought was deeply influenced by the "Messianic" hope. Not only was Jesus brought up in Galilee among a people eagerly expecting the fulfilment of that hope and itself a home of "apocalyptic,"<sup>1</sup> but, as the records prove, He was a close and penetrating student of the national literature. We may be sure that so original a thinker would not have stopped short at the "canon" of the Old Testament, but would have acquainted himself with the progress of living thought.<sup>2</sup> For all these reasons it was inevitable that, however original His own message may have been, Jesus should have expressed it in "Messianic" terms.

But though Jesus used the "Messianic" language, we cannot doubt that He used it to convey a new revelation of His own. And the key to its interpretation is still to seek. It is a profound mistake to argue that because two thinkers use the same language in which to express themselves, they must necessarily mean the same thing. The experience of no two men is ever exactly the same ;

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Charles, *op. cit.*, pp. 156-7.

<sup>2</sup> See T. Walker, *Jesus and Jewish Teaching*.



but every writer and teacher has to make himself intelligible and therefore to use symbols which are common to himself and the people to whom he speaks. This has been particularly true of the Jewish thinkers ; for they possessed a Book which they accepted as, in the most literal sense, the Word of God to the race ; their business was to interpret and unfold it. Thus they, above all people, used common forms and symbols, consecrated alike by tradition and divine authority, in which to think out and express all their own experience of life. It was in this inspired Word of God that the "Messianic" hope was revealed. Unless this is understood, the fact that a common medium of expression was used may mislead the inheritors of a different tradition into giving that medium too fixed and rigid a meaning. The secret of understanding is to be found always not in the form of the communication, but in the experience and thought which lie behind it. There can be no question that Jesus believed Himself to be the bearer of a message of transcendent importance. Men of His character do not sacrifice themselves in the prime of life for curious trifles. And further His own words and claims, no less than the reception He met with, prove beyond doubt that His revelation was something new and altogether surprising. The accredited teachers and leaders repudiated it as blasphemy. Instead, therefore, of at once reading current or traditional meanings into the form of His message, it would be wiser to ask first what it was that He was endeavouring to express through this form.

The records have preserved many references to the Old Testament in the sayings of Jesus, and a

study of them may provide a clue to His method. Jesus, like all devout Jews, had an intimate knowledge of the Scriptures. But, unlike the orthodox teachers, He never quotes an author merely because of a superficial appropriateness in the language. A comparison of the circumstances in each case leaves no doubt that it was His habit to go direct to the experience itself. He lives through it again with the writer, following his response to its challenge and the new illumination it has brought to his mind. Then He re-interprets it in the light of His own experience, thus giving the words a fresh and vital significance.<sup>1</sup> We should naturally expect to find that when Jesus used the "Messianic" language He interpreted it in the same spirit. We may therefore look to the fundamental ideas which underlay the whole "Messianic" conception for the key to the understanding of Jesus' interpretation of that language. What were they?

(iii) *The Meaning of the "Messianic" Hope.*

The answer has already been indicated. God is altogether righteous. And yet, to use the terms then current, this world is plainly not "the Kingdom of God" in which "His will is done." The righteous God cannot acquiesce in such a world, but must sooner or later secure His reign on an earth which corresponds to the Divine Will, or else create a new world which will truly be His Kingdom. But how is this Kingdom of God to be conceived? By what means is it to be introduced? How are its enemies to be dealt with? A variety of answers

<sup>1</sup> Cf. pp. 48-58, *infra*.

had been given. But one fact becomes immediately apparent : the nature of the answers will depend entirely on the character of the God Whose Kingdom is to be introduced. We can therefore distinguish three fundamental questions :

What is the character of the supreme Ruler of the Kingdom ?

What are the " laws " upon which His Kingdom is to be founded and which its citizens must obey ?

What are the means by which His Kingdom must be introduced ?

God would act. But how ? Would the Ineffable Majesty intervene " in person " in human affairs ? The growing conviction was that He would not ; He would appoint a Representative and send him to introduce the kingdom and banish evil. This Representative was known as the Messiah. *The Messiah was therefore to be :*

*The Revealer of the true character and purpose of God.*

*The Revealer of the " laws " of God's Kingdom.*

*The Revealer of the method by which God would introduce His Kingdom and secure the allegiance of men.*

*The Representative of God, the embodiment of His purpose, who would in His own person actually introduce that Kingdom by that method.*

The " wisdom " writers had made the Jews familiar with the conception of the " Word " or " Wisdom " of God working throughout creation and ordering all things according to the Divine purpose. It was this Divine Spirit Who, as all admitted, had in some measure possessed and inspired the true prophets of God throughout their history and compelled them to the utterance of

His message. The "heir of the prophets" would therefore only be true to the finest religious thought of "God's people" if he divined that the Messiah must be One who was surrendered to and inspired by this Spirit not "in some measure" but to the very uttermost. (Cf. John iii, 34.)

*(iv) Jesus' Claim to Messiahship.*

Jesus was profoundly conscious of these great problems with which the prophets and seers of Israel had wrestled as Jacob wrestled with the Angel of the Lord. There never lived a man more sensitive to evil and suffering. He shared to the full their passionate conviction that this world fails to correspond to the Divine Will because man alienates himself from God, and that it is God's unshakable purpose to transform the society of mankind into a kingdom in which good will at last be triumphant over evil and the Divine Spirit supreme. He believed like them that this Divine purpose must be achieved through a supreme revelation of God's power and glory. And He grasped with the insight of genius the full meaning of the truth which, dim and inarticulate, had been struggling towards self-consciousness in the whole conception of a personal Messiah : the truth that if God's great revelation of Himself was to be made fully effective it would have to be by some expression of Himself in terms of human life, such as could be understood by all men.

The whole trend of Israel's religious development now stood revealed. All the paths of thought and experience converged on to one vital question : What is the true character of God ? It was to be

God's revelation of Himself *as He truly is* that was at last to win men's allegiance and make the world His own ; it was *His* will that was to be " the law " of the new Kingdom. And Jesus saw that it was just there, at the crucial point, that man had always failed, and that in this failure lay the cause of his most tragic errors and disasters. Man had not seen God as He truly is. And so God would at last reveal Himself in a human form—in a Messiah who would be the visible, living embodiment of His Spirit and purpose and power.

But even in early boyhood there had dawned in Jesus' mind a new revelation of God—the God who is perfect and unchanging Love. The conviction grew upon Him that in the knowledge of *this* God was to be found the answer to every problem that had baffled mankind, until it issued in an overwhelming certainty that He had discovered the true God Whom all the world was seeking, and that He, Jesus, had been chosen as the divinely appointed Messenger to reveal this God to men. What else could this mean than the call to " Messiahship " ?

(v) *Messiah or Son of Man ?*

Apparently, however, Jesus did not call Himself Messiah. The reason is not far to seek. It would seem that this term had come to be identified with the popular " Davidic " Messiah, who was to establish the Kingdom by force of arms and destroy the enemies of the nation. Such a conception was utterly alien to the mind of Jesus. Moreover His precise problem was this : He had to teach the men whom He addressed what His

own very original conceptions of God and Messiahship were, and He had to do this by giving a new meaning to current conceptions. Had He used the popular term "Messiah," it would have at once suggested to the masses the warlike Deliverer of the house of David ; and they were only too ready to follow any insurrectionary leader who promised hope of deliverance from the hated "oppressor." Thus it was not likely that they would wait to learn what Jesus Himself meant by the title. To employ it would therefore be to lay Himself open to fatal misunderstandings which might at any time excite their inflammable minds to violence. And further it could not fail to arouse the apprehensions of the Roman Governor and Herod, with inevitably fatal consequences.

There was, however, another and more spiritual conception represented by the title "Son of Man." It certainly had associations with which Jesus was not in sympathy ; but it was far more suitable for His purpose. In the first place it was never used of the popular Messiah. Secondly, it had an Old Testament history in which it seems to have meant man as occupying his divinely appointed place in creation. Thus in Psalm viii it is used of man as contrasted with the animal world : the lord of creation who is "but a little lower than the angels." (It is worth noting that Jehovah addresses the prostrate Ezekiel with the words : "Son of Man, stand upon thy feet and I will speak to thee.") In Daniel it is used, apparently, as representing "the saints of the Most High" (righteous Israel), as contrasted with the "brute" kingdoms of this world. It was thus very nearly equivalent to "man as God intends him to be." In Ezekiel it is

addressed to the prophet himself, and appears to mean "God's Messenger and spokesman whom He has chosen to receive His revelation and deliver it on His behalf to the people." For it is used only by the Divine Spirit who carries Ezekiel away and shows him a vision ("The heavens were opened and I saw visions of God," Ezek. i, 1), and then commissions him to tell the people God's truth: "(The Divine Voice says) I will speak to you. I am sending you to the Israelites . . . a rebellious race . . . whether they listen or refuse to listen, they shall at least learn that there is a prophet among them. Son of Man, go to Israel and repeat My words to them . . ." (Ezek. ii, 1-8, iii, 4 f., etc.). No doubt the actual content of Ezekiel's message was in the main repugnant to the whole spirit of Jesus' own revelation; but the conception of "the chosen Messenger and mouthpiece of God" was the significant thought.<sup>1</sup> It is true, again, that in the great series of apocalyptic scenes in which the Son of Man is depicted as appearing from Heaven to usher in God's Kingdom, this "Messianic" Judge condemns the unrighteous and heathen remorselessly to eternal torments. But in them also there were descriptions of God's Representative which would appeal to Jesus with peculiar force:<sup>2</sup>

This is the Son of Man who hath righteousness,  
With whom dwelleth uprightness;  
Who revealeth all the treasures of that which is hidden (1 Enoch  
xlvi, 3, 4) . . .  
For he is mighty in all the secrets of righteousness,

<sup>1</sup> Pa. lxxx, 17, had probably a "messianic" reference, and perhaps represents an intermediate use of "Son of Man."

<sup>2</sup> And the false conception of the Judgment was deliberately corrected by Jesus on the only occasion on which He made public use of the eschatological imagery. See pp. 67-69 *infra*.

And unrighteousness shall vanish as a show, and have no continuance (xlix, 2) . . .

He shall be staff to the righteous whereon to stay themselves ;

And he shall be the light of the Gentiles,

And the hope of those that are troubled at heart (lxviii, 4).

If we combine the conceptions underlying all these passages we find that the Son of Man is to be : firstly, " representative man " <sup>1</sup> in the sense of man as God meant him to be ; secondly, " the Representative of God " ; and thirdly, " the Revealer of the secrets of God." It would be difficult to find a title that more accurately sums up Jesus' own conception of His work than this of the man who was chosen and sent to be the Revealer and Representative of God to men. And this name would be far less likely to cause difficulties than any other known Messianic title ; for, besides its Old Testament associations, in apocalyptic literature it referred to a Representative coming straight from heaven to judge, not one who has any work to do on earth before the catastrophe ; and thus a Son of Man coming as a man among men would excite curiosity and reflection rather than an expectation of immediate and forcible intervention. If, then, Jesus had to find a title that could at once be used to assert His claim to be the Representative of God, avoid exciting fallacious hopes, and give Him an opportunity for educating the people to understand Messiahship in His own sense, He could not have found one more suitable than " Son of Man."

(vi) *The Ultimate Meaning of Messiahship.*

We can now understand what at first sight appears

<sup>1</sup> The term as used here has no connection with the subsequent theological usages.



so unintelligible to the modern mind—why Jesus should have deliberately chosen the issue of Messiahship on which to challenge the religious world of His day, even after it was made clear to Him that this challenge meant death. The issue seems strange and remote to us, a stirring of the dust of long-buried controversies. But, as we have already seen, the whole “Messianic” conception was of necessity derived from the conception of God; and therefore the real issue of Messiahship was not merely this or that conception of the “Messianic” hope, but the conception of God that underlay it. The one duty of the Messiah was to reveal God to men and make His influence supreme. Jesus therefore surrendered Himself utterly to God, in order that God might express Himself perfectly in His Messiah. This was the overmastering purpose with which He set out on His public career.

This conception of Messiahship is also the explanation of why Jesus did not put His own claim to Messiahship in the foreground until that was the only means by which He could effectively appeal to the understanding of the disciples. The Messiah was to reveal not Himself but God, to carry out God’s will not His own; and Jesus therefore lays all the emphasis in His teaching on God and His Kingdom. It is true that He acts always as God’s Representative, and as if with His authority, and that He defended His right to do so. But He never uses the title that might have excited fanaticism and turned men’s eyes on Himself; and even when He asserts that authority, it is always as the authority “of Him Who sent me.”

PART II  
*ECCE HOMO*



## CHAPTER I

### PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

BEFORE following Jesus' public career it may be of value to gather up the fragmentary records which throw light on His personality and attempt to reconstruct them into a portrait.

#### (i) *The Gestures of Jesus.*

Of His personal traits nothing is told us directly in the narrative, but a few are suggested incidentally.

Jesus evidently had a way of expressing Himself spontaneously in gestures. "He stretched out his hand and touched the man" is a familiar phrase in the records. The action conveys a sympathy that no mere words could do. Sometimes it involved no little courage, as in the case of the lepers<sup>1</sup> who were "untouchables" in Palestine. We can imagine the scene: a leper approaches the new teacher; we hear the man's imploring question, while the crowd stands silent and aloof; and then suddenly Jesus "put out his hand and touched him." It was an abrupt, emphatic gesture, as Mark's phrase indicates: "He flung out his hand" (Mark vii, 32).

<sup>1</sup> It has been suggested to me that a reference to St. Francis of Assisi would suggest a suitable imaginative background. See *Little Plays of St. Francis*. Cf. *The Mirror of Perfection*, chaps. xlv and lviii; *Little Flowers*, ch. xxv.

And it was habitual (Luke iv, 40; Mark viii, 22; Matt. xx, 34; cf. also Mark i, 31; v, 41; ix, 27; *κατήσας* suggests a firm clasp of the hand). He stops the bier of the widow's son at Nain with the same impulsive gesture (Luke vii, 14). He "throws out his hand" to indicate his disciples (Matt. xii, 49). He "lays his hand" on the little children who are brought to Him (Mark x, 16) and "puts his arm round" another child (Mark ix, 36). His way of breaking bread was so characteristic that the two disciples at Emmaus suddenly recognised "the stranger" when he "broke the bread" (Luke xxiv, 30-31; Mark vi, 41; viii, 6-7; xiv, 22-23). His last recorded act was to raise His hands in blessing on the disciples (Luke xxiv, 50). A final example will show how instinctive and natural these movements were: When the woman caught in adultery was brought to Jesus, His first impulse was to bend down and begin scribbling on the ground with His finger (John viii, 6). Such spontaneous gestures reveal personality.

(ii) *The Face of Jesus.*

But a man's feelings show themselves most clearly in his face. The disciples were evidently so impressed with what they saw in Jesus' face that they fell into the habit of watching it—involuntarily, it would seem, for they reveal the fact quite casually. When Jesus was watching the "rich young ruler," they must have been watching Jesus, for they caught His expression. "Jesus looking at him loved him," says the recorder (Mark x, 21). We constantly read that "He was moved with compassion"—it must have been His look that revealed it (e.g., Mark vi, 34; Matt. ix,

36; Mark i, 41; Luke vii, 13; Matt. xx, 34). Twice at least they caught a quick flash of anger (Mark iii, 5; x, 13-16). When Jesus was deeply moved what they read in His face astonished them. One memorable occasion was the transfiguration: "His whole appearance changed before their eyes; His face became radiant" (Mark ix, 2-3; Matt. xvii, 2; Luke ix, 29). Another was on the last journey to Jerusalem (Mark x, 32). What did Pilate and Herod read in Jesus' face at the trial that they refused to admit His guilt even under pressure? (pp. 102, 210 f., *infra*). Years afterwards St. Paul spoke of "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God seen in the face of Jesus Messiah" (2 Cor. iv, 6; cf. also Rev. i, 16 with Matt. xvii, 2, and Rev. xxii, 4).

(iii) *The Gaze of Jesus.*

Jesus' eyes arrested men's attention: His quick keen glance, and the look of intent interest that often followed it. He would "stand watching" something that caught His attention (John vi, 5; Mark v, 38; xii, 41). "He raised his eyes and fixed them on the disciples" (Luke vi, 20); "Peter began to remonstrate . . . and Jesus turned round and looked at the disciples" (Mark viii, 33); "He entered the Temple and gazed round at everything, and then . . . went away" (Mark xi, 11; cf. Mark v, 32; x, 21). The disciples made no deliberate effort to remember these details; but as soon as they began to tell the story they found themselves mentioning them spontaneously; it was Jesus as they knew Him: a thing that, once seen, you could not forget. How vividly they recalled Him in the synagogue, His searching glance travelling from

face to face (Mark iii, 5) ; or pausing to look His enemies full in the face before adding His last word to the parable of the vineyard (Luke xx, 17). There was another moment, in the trial scene, branded on Peter's memory, when amid his heated and frightened denials he suddenly found himself looking into the eyes of Jesus (Luke xxii, 61). And how penetrating that glance was! One quick look and He had taken in the whole situation : Zacchæus in the tree, the palsied man brought to be cured of bodily infirmity but with other and more urgent needs written in his face (Luke xix, 1-5 ; cf. p. 73 *infra* ; Mark ii, 5). " His eyes," said a disciple long afterwards, " His eyes were like flames " (Rev. i, 14). Plato noticed the same habit in Socrates : that clear steady gaze that held men as under a spell (*Phaedo*, 86, 117). Cannot the face of Jesus reveal something of Him to us, as we watch it through the memory of His friends ?

## CHAPTER II

### THE MIND OF JESUS

THE workings of a man's mind take us deeper into the secret of his personality.

#### (i) *His Use of Nicknames and Diminutives.*

"You see," says the writer who perhaps came nearest to the spirit of Jesus, "how much the Father loves us in this, that He has called us τέκνα, children"; and he himself uses the word habitually (cf. 1 John ii, 1, 12, 18, 28; iii, 2, 7; iv, 4; v. 21). It was from Jesus that he borrowed both the name and the habit. With what effect Jesus used such words can be seen in Mark's account of the young nobleman. Preoccupied with the boy's difficulties, Jesus lets fall some remarks about wealth that fill the disciples with consternation; turning round, He catches sight of the dismay on their faces; "τέκνα," He says, responding immediately, "it is hard . . ." (Mark x, 24; cf. John xxi, 5). The habit also reflects His gentleness in dealing with the weak and the hurt (e.g., Mark ii, 5; v, 34). So, too, His use of diminutives. Jairus' daughter is παιδίον — "little woman," as we might say (Mark v, 23); even the sparrows are στρουθία — "poor little things," sold at five a farthing (Luke xii, 6; Matt. x, 29).

Among His more intimate friends Jesus used nicknames. The disciples, ever full of worries and



anxieties, were "*oligopists*"—"the little faiths" (Matt. vi, 30, viii, 26; xiv, 31; xvi, 8); impulsive and hot-headed James and John are "the brothers Thunderer"<sup>1</sup> (Mark iii, 17); Simon, honest, warm-hearted, loyal, is Peter—"Mr. Stone"—"the foundation stone" of the Church, Jesus explains (Matt. xvi, 18).

(ii) *His Sense of Humour.*

The same disposition reveals itself in the fresh and delightful vein of humour that runs all through Jesus' comments on life. When the disciples interpret His reference to the "secret" of the Kingdom to mean that He wishes to conceal His message (He who was spending all His life and genius in effort after effort to make men understand!) Jesus makes fun of them: "Yes, just as a man lights a lamp and then hides it under the furniture, in case it might give light" (Mark iv, 11, 21). When criticised for not accommodating His new teaching to the traditional forms of religious instruction, He asks His critics to imagine the effect of patching an old shirt with unshrunk cloth (Mark ii, 21; cf. Luke v, 36). He meets men's pessimistic doubts, whether the God Who created them can really be trusted to supply their needs, with the picture of a father gravely presenting his hungry and clamorous little boy with a stone instead of a loaf (Matt. vii, 9-11; cf. Luke xi, 11-12). Their stubborn belief that a man's conduct is not the necessary outcome of his character suggests men busily searching brambles for grapes and thistle-stalks for figs (Matt. vii, 16; cf. Luke vi, 44). His comments on the ways of men are full of these

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Measure for Measure*, Act II, Sc. ii, 110-113, with Luke ix, 52-56.

delightful absurdities: camels squeeze their impossible bulk through needles' eyes (Mark x, 25), or disappear down the throats of absent-minded Pharisees (Matt. xxiii, 24); the Pharisee appears again busily polishing the outside of his cups and plates—so busy that he forgets the inside altogether (Matt. xxiii, 25); mountains uproot themselves to move majestically through the air (Matt. xvii, 20). Certain teachers remind him of a blind man confidently volunteering to show another blind man the way, and leading him—into the ditch (Matt. xv, 14; cf. Luke vi, 39). On the other hand, He suggests that it is going rather too far in a pupil to claim superiority to his teacher; let him be content to admit equality! (Matt. x, 24-25). Men's astonishing capacity for magnifying other people's failings while remaining blind to their own provokes a picture of an anxious little man solemnly strutting to and fro with a plank of wood projecting from his eye and earnestly begging permission to remove a speck from his brother's eye (Matt. vii, 3-5). Did not a peasant audience enjoy the picture of themselves politely offering the other cheek to the smiter? (Matt. v, 39).

The Jew was apt to feel an exclusive pride in his superiority, as a member of "the Chosen Race," to the "accursed Gentile" idolator and the tax-gatherer who had sold himself to the oppressor; and no less pride in his superiority as a "righteous" observer of the Law to the "sinners." Jesus treats this conscious self-importance with delightful mock-seriousness.<sup>1</sup> Love your enemies, he tells his

<sup>1</sup> In order to appreciate this point, it is necessary to remember that Jesus' undisguised sympathy with these outcasts became a byword. See p. 70 f. *infra*.

patriotic audience, for "even the tax-gatherers" can love their friends. Was a Jew to be worsted by a publican? (And yet did anyone hate his enemies more heartily than the proud Jew? And Levi the publican was sitting in full view of them among the chosen Twelve as Jesus spoke!) Do good to those who injure and persecute you; why, do not "even the sinners" repay a kindness done to them? Were "the righteous" to do no better than "the sinners"? (*Was* the Jew so concerned to benefit his persecutors and enemies? Was that their "Messianic" hope?) Was it only "the Gentiles" who worried over mundane matters and used "vain repetitions"? (Matt. v, 46, 47; Luke vi, 32-34; Matt. vi, 7, 31-32; with Matt. v, 47 cf. Luke x, 31-33; vii, 44-46; xiv, 7-11; and with Matt. vi, 7, cf. Matt. xxiii, 5; Mark xii, 40, etc.).

How effectively Jesus could employ humour is seen in the incident of John the Baptist's messengers (Matt. xi, 2-11; Luke vii, 18-28). Some of Jesus' disciples had originally followed John. We can readily understand their dismay when the very man who had pointed them to Jesus bluntly asks for His credentials. John vacillating! Had Herod succeeded in taming that independent spirit at last? Jesus reads the question in their faces and in a few words reveals its absurdity. He recalls the John they knew: the stern, unbending figure standing against the background of the pliant reeds, telling the elect of God (see Luke iii, 7 and 8) that they reminded him of vipers scurrying from the fire. John the ascetic, clothed in camel-hair and eating desert food, now a courtier after the manner of Juvenal's "Greekling,"<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Juvenal, *Satire*, iii.

eating delicately, robed luxuriously, and accommodating himself to his master's whims like those reeds swaying in the wind! John with his piercing message of judgment and righteousness a "silken courtier whispering honied nothings"! Could John have been defended more effectively? (Matt. xi, 2-11; Luke vii, 18-28).

Jesus' comments on men's behaviour reveal the same humorous appraisal. He watches with quiet amusement the conduct of certain hypocritical Pharisees who used to stand in full view of the market crowd to say their prayers, and "blew a trumpet" before doling out charity, in order to make sure that the general public should not miss the benefit of their pious example (Matt. vi, 1-6), or made it plain that they were fasting by their lugubrious appearance ("disfiguring their faces," Jesus calls it) with the same object (Matt. vi, 16); and their scramble for the more honourable seats at big banquets—at times a guest of importance would arrive after them, and one or other of these too ambitious gentlemen would be compelled to retire in chagrin to the only place now vacant, the lowest! Why not begin by taking the lowest seat, Jesus gravely suggests, and so let your modesty win public recognition (Luke xiv, 7-11)? He notes, too, how these dignified gentlemen always invited each other to their banquets and yet angrily repudiated the suggestion that they did so in order to be invited in return. Would it not be better, He says, to make sure your motives are not misunderstood by refraining from asking your rich neighbours and relatives "in case they might ask you in return" (Luke xiv, 12-13)? Nor did the official world escape his irony. Witness the picture

of the devil-may-care magistrate on the seat of justice including heaven and earth in one superb gesture of defiance — before succumbing to a woman's tongue (Luke xviii, 1-5).

Indeed, Jesus' sense of humour never failed Him, however serious the situation. After speaking of the suffering and persecution that awaited Him and His followers, He adds at once: But do not be dismayed; are your adversaries wolves? Then seize the initiative from them and go down to them "as lambs among the wolves." The wolf who steals among the flock "in sheep's clothing" and the wolf who "descends on the fold" are familiar figures; but the suggestion that the lamb should descend on the wolf-pack to convert it from its evil ways to lamb-like innocence is as new as it is refreshing.<sup>1</sup> Could anything be more revealing? Jesus, the carpenter of Nazareth, stands confronting all the most powerful forces of the age; in the foreground the leaders of His own nation, behind them Herod and the whole power of Rome. His following is a handful of foolish friends, without wealth, without political influence, without skill in arms. And yet, so perfect is His confidence in God that He faces them with His mind alight with humour (Luke x, 3).

Again, how characteristic is the touch when, on the dreadful Day of Judgment, the "righteous" who have been formally welcomed into God's Kingdom, reply that there must surely be some mistake; for, as they modestly hint, they cannot believe that *they* were ever intended to enter Heaven (Matt. xxv, 37-39).

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the delightful story in *Little Flowers of St. Francis*, ch. xxi, and *Little Plays of St. Francis*, "Brother Wolf."

The acid test of a thing's reality is its ability to bear the dry light of humour : Jesus does not hesitate to bring the God He knew into contact with the camel struggling through the needle's eye and the mountain moving solemnly into the lake.

(iii) *His Richness of Metaphor and Illustration.*

The whole Gospel record (if we eliminate repetitions) represents an afternoon's reading. A considerable part even of this brief narrative is concerned with one central incident—the "passion" and death of Jesus. The accounts consist mostly of fragmentary memories and sayings, often grouped together without connection and framed in but the vaguest historical outline of His public career. And yet the mind so casually revealed in chance sayings, metaphors, scraps of conversation and brief stories is astonishing in its range of interest, its sureness of apprehension, its appreciation of life. The sayings reflect, like many-faceted jewels, the life of the home and the market, the field and the vineyard, the lake and the pasture, the high roads and the palace of the King.

Jesus' talk is full of glimpses of home life : bread-making, salt and its uses, mending shirts, grinding the daily corn ; evening, when the day's work is over and the lamps are lit in the house, the cleaning of plates and cups, the throwing out of scraps for the birds ; household treasures displayed to admiring friends, and anxiety about thieves and moths and rust ; the sweeping of every nook and corner for the lost coin, and the joy of telling the neighbours when it is found ; the unexpected arrival of a friend to find the larder empty, and the waking of an indignant neighbour to borrow bread ; buying

grain for the family from the merchant who heaps up the boy's cloth till it spills over; and family quarrels (Luke xiii, 21; Mark ix, 49-50; Matt. v. 13; Luke v, 36; Matt. xxiv, 41; v, 15; vi, 22; xxiii, 25; vi, 26; xii, 35; xiii, 52; vi, 19; Luke xv, 8 f.; xi, 5 f.; vi, 38; Mark iii, 25). Much of Jesus' ministry was spent on the road, and there are many reminiscences of sights seen by the wayside: robber-infested roads, with victims lying in the ditch to tell their own pitiful story, the picturesque effect of the city perched on a hill, whitewashed graves dazzling in the Eastern sunlight, huts constructed in the sandy beds of dry watercourses and collapsing suddenly in a tropical storm, the forlorn appearance of the abandoned dwelling (Luke x, 30-37; Matt. v, 14; xxiii, 27; vii, 26-27; Luke xiv, 28 f.; cf. xi, 24; xiii, 35).

As an experienced traveller Jesus knows that the wide city gate and the main road, though more conspicuous and inviting than the little side gate opening on a rough footpath, are not always the right way to follow (Matt. vii, 13-14). Other pictures come from the market-place: overburdened pack-animals, children playing in the market-square, the marriage procession at midnight which startles the sleeping bride's-maids, merchants and buyers haggling over prices, the keen face of the expert buyer (Luke xi, 46; vii, 31 f.; Matt. xxv, 1 f.; v, 34 f.; xiii, 45). There are glimpses of farm life: ploughing, sowing and reaping, threshing, corn-fields at harvest time (Luke ix, 62; Mark iv, 4-8; Matt. xiii, 24 f.; Luke xxii, 31; Matt. ix, 37-38; John iv, 35); of shepherds and their flocks; sheep harried by dogs or wolves,

sheep lost on the mountains and fallen into wells, evening on the hills when the sheep and goats were separated after pasture (Matt. ix, 36; John x, 12; Luke xv, 4 f.; Matt. xii, 11; Luke xiv, 5; Matt. xxv, 32; cf. x, 6 f., xv, 24; John x, 1-16); and of fishing on the lake (Matt. xiii, 47-48). How appropriate is the metaphor with which Jesus invites His fishermen friends to follow Him (Mark i, 17). This wealth of imagery is the more convincing because it is not the product of literary art, but the unstudied working of a quick observant mind and a retentive memory. His acute powers of observation and acquaintance with all nature's ways evidently made a deep impression on His followers. Luke records how He surprised the fishermen with a superior knowledge of their own craft (Luke v, 1-11); and the story at the end of John suggests that such knowledge was characteristic: "Throw down the net to the right," calls the stranger on the shore, "and you will find fish," and at once a flash of recognition comes to John: "It is the Master!" (John xxi, 4-7).

Jesus was acquainted with many of the servant class, and observed them shrewdly. He notes how some were spoilt by responsibility, while others were made by it (Matt. xxiv, 45 f. and Luke xvi, 1 f.; Matt. xxv, 14 f.). He speaks with humorous appreciation of their capacity for going to sleep in the absence of the Master: one of the latter impresses on his porter before leaving that he really must keep awake (Mark xiii, 34), while another is so agreeably surprised at finding them awake on his return that he makes them sit down to a feast and waits on them himself! (Luke xii, 37). But Jesus knew how much of the world's work is done by



these quiet, unpretentious workers, and He makes such service the measure of true greatness (Mark x, 43-45, ix, 35; Luke xxii, 27; John xiii, 1-17).

The same shrewd glance was turned on "the great." We can still see them as they lived in His memory: the proud Rabbi condescending to popular deference (Mark xii, 38); Dives "clothed in purple and fine linen, and feasting sumptuously every day" (Luke xvi, 19); the "rich fool" who stored up wealth beyond the dreams of avarice, and was just settling down to enjoy himself with a sigh of satisfaction—when he died! (Luke xii, 13*f.*).

Nor was Jesus less interested in the events of the wider political world. He had evidently studied Herod's character (Luke xiii, 32). He had reflected on the disastrous results of the great civil war; the fall of the "powerful" Antony before "the stronger" Octavian; the wisdom of an earlier Herod in making his peace so quickly with Augustus (Mark iii, 24-27 and Luke xiv, 31-32 with *Jos. Wars* Bk. I, ch. xiv, xvi, xx); the diplomatic struggle between the Jews and Archelaus at Rome (Luke xix, 12, 14, with *Jos. Wars* Bk. II, ch. ii and vi); and the strained relations between "the chief men of Galilee" and Herod (Matt. xxii, 2-7, with Mark vi, 21). Men found that he was interested in all such matters (cf. Luke xiii, 1-5).

(iv) *His Love of Nature.*

The 'tragi-comedy' of human life was not the only thing that interested Jesus. He was keenly sensitive to the wonder and beauty of wild nature. His followers have recorded his habit of retreating into the quiet of the hills, above all in the darkness when He could be alone with God beneath the

stars and the night winds (Mark i, 35, 45, vi, 31, 46, ix, 2; Luke vi, 12, etc.). It was in "the open country" that He faced the first great crisis. "He was alone with the wild creatures," says Mark (i, 13). Who told the disciples that if not Jesus Himself? He must have sat watching them (cf. e.g. Luke xi, 12; Matt. x, 16, xxiv, 28). He loved the slopes of Olivet and the garden of Gethsemane, "with the hoarse chatter of Kedron over its stony bed and its olives dark against the moon"<sup>1</sup> (Luke xxii, 39; John xviii, 1-2). He had "observed the birds," and pictures of them came spontaneously to His mind: birds on the wing, and fluttering on the branches; birds in the nest, and the fallen fledgling; the mother hen nestling down with her brood under her wings (Mark iv, 4; Luke xiii, 19; Matt. x, 29; Luke xiii, 34). The red sky of morning and of sunset, clouds in the West bringing rain, the hot south wind that means drought; birds coming home to roost in the quiet evening, foxes stealing to their lairs in the quiet dawn, the fig-tree with its curtain of green leaves—all these became familiar sights to one who lived much under the open sky (Matt. xvi, 3; Luke xii, 54, 55; Matt. viii, 20; Luke xxi, 29-30). He pondered over the mysterious life in the tiny seed and the strange reproductive powers of the earth (Mark iv, 26 f.; Matt. xvii, 20; Mark iv, 31, 32; John xii, 24). The commonest of the wild flowers were to Jesus instinct with the whole beauty of nature; their simple grace and loveliness made the splendour of Israel's most royal king seem tawdry and unsatisfying. Whence comes this beauty, so useless and so fugitive, and yet so lavish that nature squanders it on "the

<sup>1</sup> Stopford-Brooke.

grass of the field"? In human experience how is beauty born? Can it spring from anything but the impassioned love and joy of the worker absorbed in what he is creating? And does the beauty into which untrammelled nature everywhere flowers in such profusion come otherwise? (Luke xii, 27-28; Matt. vi, 28). These hints of a deep delight in lovely and simple things become the more significant when we remember that the great figures of the early Church, including the disciples from whom the Gospels came, themselves show no appreciation of the beauty of wild nature.<sup>1</sup>

(v) *His Use of the Old Testament.*

There are few more searching tests of the quality of a man's mind than his treatment of the classical literature of his nation and the scholarship that has grown up round it. To the orthodox Jew "the Scriptures" were not merely the classics; they were the revelation at once of the very essence of the Divine wisdom and of the whole duty of man. The "Torah" was not the product of man's mind or art, nor even of the religious genius of the race, but of the direct creative activity of God. The Rabbinic scholars taught that their commentaries—the oral "traditions"—were as truly inspired as "the Law." It is not surprising that conventionality and literalism were the ruling canons of interpretation. Thus an original and independent attitude towards these writings was the rarest of achievements, demanding the finest qualities of mind and courage. In defiance of tradition and practice Jesus went direct to the experience that lay behind

<sup>1</sup> For a kindred feeling see St. Francis: *The Mirror of Perfection*, chaps. cxvii-cxx.

the written word, grasped its essential meaning, and judged even the most sacred and famous of the authors fearlessly by His own standard of values.

On the eve of Israel's entry into "the promised land" (says the author of Deuteronomy) her divinely-appointed leader and lawgiver reviewed the past history of the nation in order to make plain the inner meaning of God's dealings with them: their "testing" in "the wilderness," the communication of "the Law" (God's revelation) to Moses "in solitude" during "forty days and nights," and the bearing of it all upon their winning of the new "kingdom" (Deut. viii, 2 f., ix, 9 f., vi, 13 f.; Exod. xxiv, 18). The circumstances of Jesus' "temptation"<sup>1</sup> were strikingly similar. He was the new divinely-chosen leader of Israel. He, too, had gone into the wilderness to work out the "law" of the Kingdom, before He showed His people the way to the new "promised land." The very language in which Jesus afterwards described this experience shows how unerringly He seized on the essential points of the analogy and interpreted its profoundest lessons for Himself (cf. Luke iv, 1 f. with above).<sup>2</sup>

The story of the prophets was an uninterrupted history of persecution and rejection, of struggle against apathy and reaction. Jesus grasped the fact that the Jewish character had remained

<sup>1</sup> The account of the Temptation must originally have come from Jesus Himself.

<sup>2</sup> It is most important to remember in all such cases of quotation from the O.T. that most Jews would know the Pentateuch at least almost by heart. The main part of their education consisted in learning it; and the Law and the Prophets were read regularly at the synagogue services. Salvation depended on accurate knowledge of it. Hence a quotation from it would at once imply the full context to Jesus' hearers.

essentially unchanged, thereby throwing a flood of light on His own problems. Again and again He uses the very language of the prophets in which to express His own experience. When He discovered that the only result of His appeals was to confirm His countrymen in their opposition and misunderstanding, he could find no more fitting language to clothe his thought than the terrible irony of Isaiah (Isa. vi, 9-10; Mark iv, 12; cf. Jer. v, 21-23; Ezek. xii, 2 and Mark viii, 18; Matt. xiii, 13 f.). When the Pharisees reproached Him with His failure to insist on ritual and formal observance, He at once confronted them with the criticism passed on their forefathers by one of their greatest prophets: "This people honour me with their lips, but their heart is far away from me, and their 'religion' is nothing but human ordinances" (Isa. xxix, 13; Mark vii, 6 f.). When they rebuked the disciples for plucking corn on the Sabbath He pointed them to David (the ancestor of the Messiah himself), who in the stress of need had committed himself to the principle which Jesus was always endeavouring in vain to impress upon the religious leaders who criticised Him—that human need overrides all the claims of ceremonial observance, however sacred (1 Sam. xxi, 1 f.; Mark ii, 25). Thus His contemporaries were displaying the same slavish devotion to ritual and tradition, the same passion for inventing rules and exalting them at the expense of the great truths of morality and religion, that had been the constant theme of prophetic criticism (cf Hosea vi, 4-11; Matt. ix, 10-13, xii, 7). And the treatment always meted out by the Jews to these prophets indicated only too plainly the fate that He and His followers might expect (Matt. v, 12;

Luke xiii, 31 f.; cf., e.g., Micah ii, 5-11, Amos ii, 12, vii, 10 f, Hosea ix, 7-8, Isa. xxviii, 9, lvii, 1-2, Jer. vii, 25 f., xx, etc.; Ezek. ii, 1-7).

The Jewish leaders, too, were the same. These "wolves in sheep's clothing" who "devoured the property of helpless widows" (Mark xii, 40), who "loaded men with burdens too grievous to be borne" (Matt. xxiii, 4) and left the masses "scattered in confusion like sheep without a shepherd" (Matt. ix, 36; Mark vi, 34), bore a close family resemblance to the leaders whose portrait was painted by Ezekiel in words of fiery indignation: "Woe to the shepherds of Israel who feed none but themselves. . . The diseased have you not healed nor tended the sickly, nor bound up the cripples, nor recovered the sheep that were scattered, nor sought the lost sheep. . . Hear therefore the words of the Lord. Behold I, yea I Myself, will seek out my sheep. . . I will seek the lost sheep and bring back those that were driven away. I will bind the cripples and heal the sick. . . And I will set one ruler over them, even my servant David, who shall feed them and be their shepherd"<sup>1</sup> (Ezek. xxxiv; Luke xix, 10, xv, 1-7; Matt. xviii, 12-13; cf., too, Luke x, 30-33).

The whole of the closing scene of Jesus' life is steeped in Old Testament memories. When He bids farewell to the cities which had so persistently rejected His message there echoes in His mind the magnificent and terrible "dooms" uttered by Isaiah against the proud cities of his own day (Isa. xiii, 19 to xiv, 23; cf Matt. xi, 23 with Isa. xiv, 13-15; Mark xiii, 2 with Isa. xiv, 12; Matt.

<sup>1</sup> It is noteworthy that, with the promise that God will seek the lost, Ezekiel's language passes into that of "messianic" prophecy.

xi, 21-22 with Isa. xlii, 19). As Jesus halts to look over Jerusalem, on His way to death, His thoughts go back to Jeremiah's warning of the disaster that must inevitably follow on such a refusal of God's way of salvation as Jesus' contemporaries, like those of Jeremiah, were guilty of: "If you execute justice . . . and do no wrong to the stranger, the fatherless and the widow . . . then indeed shall there enter in by these gates kings who shall sit upon the throne of David. . . . But if you will not hearken to my words, by Myself I swear, saith Jehovah, this House shall become a desolation" (Jer. xxii, 3-5; cf. xii, 7). The shadow of that doom already lay upon the sacred city (Matt. xxiii, 37; Luke xiii, 34). . . . Soon afterwards, when Jesus stands watching the unscrupulous greed which displayed itself, open and undisguised, in the very precincts of the House of God, He recalls the vivid accusation of the same prophet against the political leaders of his people: "Is this House which is called by My Name a den of thieves in your eyes?" (Jer. vii, 9-11). They were still there, carrying on that shameless traffic (Mark xi, 15-17). "The House of God"—suddenly Jesus' imagination fills with the vision of the ideal House of God dreamed of by another great prophet: "The strangers that unite themselves to God, even them will I bring to My Holy Mountain and make glad in My House of prayer. . . . For My House shall be called the House of prayer for all nations" (Isa. lvi, 6-7). The Temple which should have been the centre of worship of a religion that was meant to embrace all the world and found a universal Kingdom of God was being once more made a source of petty gain by a narrow religious sect (Mark xi, 17). It was,

indeed, the Court of the Gentiles that was being used for this traffic. . . . Again, at the crisis of His rejection by the leaders, Jesus' thoughts go back to the words of Isaiah when he, too, was oppressed by this sense of a great refusal. Then, too, the Jews had been specially favoured by God and His message presented directly to them for their response; then, too, their answer had been to persecute the messengers of God (Isa. v, 1 f., with Mark xii, 1-9). Jesus turns for encouragement to the psalmist who had passed through the same experience: "The Lord is on my side, I will not fear what man can do unto me. . . . The very stone which the builders rejected has been made the chief corner stone. This was God's doing. . . ." He is confident that the same will be true of Him (Ps. cxviii, 21-23 with Mark xii, 10-11). . . . Betrayed and forsaken by His friends, Jesus conquers despair with the brave faith of Zechariah: "Leap forth, O sword . . . strike the shepherd till the sheep be scattered . . . and two parts of them shall die. But the third part shall not die. Them will I bring through the fire, and refine them as silver is refined . . . and they shall call upon me, and I will hear; I will say 'They are my people'; and they shall say 'The Lord is my God'" (Zech. xiii, 7 f.). Thus, though the leader was slain, and his followers scattered, the remnant would issue from the trial purged of dross to rediscover God. This was the very faith of Jesus. Like the prophet He refuses to accept defeat, determines that the very disaster itself shall be the means of an otherwise impossible triumph (Mark xiv, 27-28). . . . So unshakable was this conviction that when Jesus stands before His ene-



mies alone, forsaken, humiliated, about to die, He can answer their challenge: "Art Thou the Messiah?" with the splendid assurance: I am, and this very suffering and shame and death are the means of my triumph and the proof of my Messiahship; they are the coming of the King, foretold by seer and prophet: "The Lord said unto my lord, Sit thou on my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool. . . Rule thou in the midst of thine enemies" (Ps. cx, 1): "Behold there came One with the clouds of heaven like unto a Son of Man . . . to whom was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples and nations and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion that shall never pass away, and his kingdom the indestructible" (Dan. vii, 13): "And the High Priest said: Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? And Jesus said: I am; and you are now about to witness<sup>1</sup> the Son of Man 'sitting at the right hand of Power' and 'coming in the clouds of Heaven'" (Mark xiv, 61-62; Matt. xxvi, 63, 64; Luke xxii, 67-69). . . . Jesus, hanging on the Cross, "cried with a loud voice: My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" (Mark xv, 34). The recorded circumstances of Jesus' death offer such a striking parallel to those described in the Psalm from which these words are quoted (Ps. xxii) that in uttering them He must surely have been fully conscious of their whole background. (It is quite possible that Jesus was repeating these Psalms to Himself.) Out of persecution and shame and suffering, with despair

<sup>1</sup> Mark *ὁψεσθε* Luke *ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν δὲ ἔσται*, Matt., *ἀπ' ἀπρὶ ὁψεσθε*; that is, Mark says that the High Priest would see the event, but Matthew and Luke that they would see it immediately. "Power" is a synonym for God.

at his heart lest God had forsaken him, the psalmist had called upon God for help, appealing to Him by His former mercies. That prayer was answered. From strangely similar circumstances, though from more bitter suffering and despair, Jesus echoes the cry of the psalmist (Ps. xxii, 1 ; Mark xv, 34). Had His own heroic faith ceased to hope for the same answer? It is surely of significance that Luke records, as the last utterance of Jesus, words taken from a psalm expressing an exactly similar experience (Ps. xxxi, 5 ; Luke xxiii, 46).

Jesus' direct references to Hebrew literature show no less clearly with what keen insight He penetrated through the whole mass of unessentials under which so much Rabbinic thought lay buried, to the fundamental principles which had been the source of all the nation's religious progress. When challenged to name "the supreme commandment" He unhesitatingly passes by the "ten commandments" of the Mosaic Law to select and unite the two great sayings which were the crowning glory of the old religion and the secret of His own profoundest experience (Deut. vi. 4-5 ; Lev. xix, 18 ; Mark xii, 29-31). This twofold commandment, He says, is the foundation on which all that is essential in "the Law and the prophets" is built up (Matt. xxii, 40). And again, He declares that the whole meaning of the Old Testament teaching may be summed up in the command to behave to others as you would like them to behave to you (Matt. vii, 12). These sayings explain why He asserts so emphatically that true progress cannot be made by disregarding the process of development found in the Old Testament, but only by understanding and

fulfilling its fundamental principles. "I did not come to destroy the Law and the Prophets, but to bring them to their full development" (Matt. v, 18). His disciples, He adds, must "go beyond" the observance of its strictest adherents before they can hope to enter the Kingdom (Matt. v, 19, 20). What Jesus means by this is further illustrated and justified by a series of practical examples. The old law, "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" (Exod. xxi, 23 f., Lev. xxiv, 17 f.), was, of course, a counsel of self-restraint and strict justice in the primitive community; the natural impulse was for the sufferer to avenge himself with interest. But this was disastrous to the community. No, said the Law, only one eye must be taken for one eye. Consideration for the good of the whole community is therefore to be substituted for reckless revenge. But there the old law stopped: "Thine eye shall *not* pity; life shall be taken for life, eye for eye . . ." (Deut. xix, 21). Jesus, however, does not stop there; He lifts the principle clear of all compromise. Consideration for the common welfare, He says, must not merely control revenge; it must be substituted for revenge and become the sole motive; and the wrong-doer, so far from being excluded, must receive consideration no less than any other, precisely because he most needs it. When therefore the Law commanded injury to be given for injury it only failed of perfection because it was not true to its own principle. "Thou shalt not kill," said the old Law, condemning thereby the extreme expression of anger and hatred (Exod. xxi, 21 f.; Deut. v, 17): Jesus goes beyond it to condemn the whole spirit of hatred and anger that leads to such expression (Matt. v, 22).

"Thou shalt not commit adultery," said the Law (Exod. xx, 14), condemning the extreme expression of lust: Jesus condemns the origin of all such acts, the lustful intention itself (Matt. v, 28). "Thou shalt not perjure thyself on oath," said the Law (Num. xxx, 2). But perjury on oath is only an extreme form of lying and deceitfulness. If men were really trustworthy and did trust one another, there would be no need of oaths; the use of them, therefore, implies deceitfulness on the one hand and distrust on the other. Love is stifled in such an atmosphere. So Jesus condemns every form of words that encourages such a spirit (Matt. v, 33 f.). "If a man is found lying with a married woman (said the Law), both of them shall be put to death. . . So shalt thou put away evil from Israel" (Deut. xxii, 22). But Jesus refused to condemn a woman caught in adultery, thus again asserting unequivocally that mercy and consideration for all, including the offender, must entirely supersede the Law of retributive Justice (John viii, 3 f.). Finally, Jesus sums up the spirit of the old Law in the brilliant phrase: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy"; and then carries the true principle to its supreme height, making love the master-law of life (Matt. v, 43-44). . . An incident from Luke affords an excellent commentary. Two of the disciples were once provoked by an act of discourtesy into expressing a wish to emulate an Old Testament hero. If Elisha called down fire from heaven upon those who insulted him, why should not they? The story is quoted with approval by the original narrator in order to inculcate a deliberate lesson (2 Kings i, 9 ff.). But Jesus re-

pudiates the suggestion with indignation (Luke ix, 51-56).

Jesus' capacity for getting to the heart of a writer's meaning is further illustrated in His answers to the "moot" questions put to Him in Jerusalem. To the Sadducees, who offered a special case to disprove immortality, He replied by setting the issue against a wider background. He takes them back to the story of Moses who, when brooding over the sufferings of his people in Egypt, was suddenly inspired by the thought that if he felt sympathy for them, surely God must do so even more; for was He not the God of their fathers—"of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob," and had He not proved His care and protection of them? Would He not do the same for their children? So the old writer had argued (Exod. iii, 1-18). Jesus carries the same thought still further. If God had proved Himself to be the Divine protector and friend of the patriarchs while they lived, would He suddenly lose all interest and affection for them when they were cut off by death? If God is Love, surely the mere fact that His friendship has been given is a sufficient guarantee that He will not let His friends pass away as if they had never been: "God is not the God of dead, but of living men" (Mark xii, 18f.).

Thus it is not too much to assert that for insight and true appreciation of the Scriptures Jesus stands alone among the teachers of His day. And yet He never allowed that admiration to blind Him to their deficiencies, nor let the atmosphere of inviolable sanctity with which they were surrounded silence the voice of criticism when they contradicted His own experience of God.

*(vi) His Austerity and Self-Discipline.*

Such independence of mind can only be achieved by courage and hard thinking. The charm of Jesus' presentation of the Gospel has sometimes obscured the austerity and strength which underlie it. But these qualities are never absent from His teaching. He pictures His disciple as a builder who "digs deep" till he reaches "bed-rock," lays his foundations on that alone, and "builds well" (Luke vi, 47-48). He warns them that only the most resolute determination will carry men into the Kingdom; they must "strain every nerve" (*ἀγωνίζεσθε*) to pass through the narrow gate, for "not many will find it" (Matt. vii, 14), and of these few still fewer will "have the strength" to pass through it (Luke xiii, 24).

The same quality is demanded in men's prayers: "Always go on praying, never give in" (Luke xviii, 1)—with the dogged determination of the wronged widow and the importunate friend (Luke xviii, 2-7, xi, 5-8).

Jesus will admit nothing short of complete self-devotion in God's cause. Half-hearted loyalty, the distracted mind, the "vacant" mind—all these, He said, render men "unfit for the Kingdom" (Matt. vi, 24 f.; xii, 43 f.). To all who evaded a definite decision with conventional excuses His answer was stern and brief (Luke ix, 59-62).

It is, again, characteristic of Jesus that He will allow no one to follow Him under any illusion about the conditions of this service. When the scholar said impulsively that he would follow Jesus wherever He went, he was responding to Jesus' own call. And yet Jesus pulls him up short: Does he

know what that means? Is he prepared not for comfort, but for the hardships of a campaign? (Luke ix, 57-58). Impulsive good nature is worthless here (Mark iv, 5, 6, 16, 17). So men must choose with their eyes open. Would a builder, or a king at war, commence operations without having first "sat down and counted the cost"? Could His followers imagine that God's service demanded less: that they too would not have to sit down first and think out what it would cost them, what resources they had, what sacrifices they were prepared to make? (Luke xiv, 25-33).

Nor does He leave them in any doubt as to what these sacrifices are: for He adds at once that no one can be His follower unless he is prepared to give up "everything that he has" (Luke xiv, 33). Even that is not all; for when Jesus bade the young man sell all that he possessed and follow Him (Mark x, 21), it was quite clear what following Him then involved; it meant not only poverty, homelessness, loss of friends, the sacrifice of the closest human ties and persecution—it meant also, as Jesus Himself told the crowds with disconcerting plainness, literally joining a procession of condemned criminals (e.g. Luke xiv, 25-27). To take up the Cross is a metaphor to us; we have not passed men carrying their crosses or hanging on the cross, as we go about our daily work. Most of those who listened to Jesus had. And yet He not only chose that way Himself, but unhesitatingly demanded that His followers should do the same. They must be ready, He says elsewhere, to become "the slaves of all"—be at the beck and call of everyone (Mark x, 43-44). They must be prepared to sacrifice what seems as indispensable as their

hand or foot, if it prevents them from entering the Kingdom of Love (Mark ix, 43-50).<sup>1</sup>

This thought reaches its most impressive utterance in the great sayings about self-sacrifice: "If any man would be my follower, he must forget the claims of self. . . So long as a man is concerned to 'save' himself, he is 'lost'; the man who is 'saved' is he who is 'lost' in the service of the Gospel and its Messiah" (Mark viii, 35-37). Such demands admit of no compromise; they must be decisively accepted or decisively rejected (Luke xii, 51-53, xiv, 26).

The balance between the claims of action and thought—one of the most difficult of human achievements—is thus maintained with perfect steadiness. The Western Church is in no danger of forgetting the saying that "not every one who calls Me Rabbi will enter the Kingdom, but he who does what my Heavenly Father wills" (Matt. vii, 21, 26; cf. Luke x, 37). But Jesus regarded clear and disinterested thinking as no less vitally important. His comparison of the eye to a lamp illustrates this (Matt. vi, 22-23; Luke xi, 34-36). Just as the eye illuminates the mind as to the real nature of the world that lies about us, making man dependent on his "vision" for accurate knowledge and appropriate reaction, so is he dependent on his mental (spiritual) vision for insight into the facts of the spiritual world. Unless that vision is clear and can see things in the right perspective (*ἀπ' αὐτοῦ*) there can be no true discernment of realities at all,

<sup>1</sup> An alternative interpretation of this saying is that it is better to live up to a sincere though maimed form of Christianity (cf. the Jewish rejection of Greek sculpture as idolatry) rather than retain full freedom at the cost of sacrificing the ideal, even though the former is not the highest form of Christianity (cf. 1 Cor. viii, and pp. 69, 80 f.



life is at best full of confusion, at worst a blind groping in the dark. How attractive the contrast makes the ideal on which Jesus insists : an insight and disinterestedness to which the whole world of reality lies radiantly clear before the mind, without shadow or confusion (Luke xi, 36). Again, consider what is implied in such sayings as that a bad character can no more issue in a noble life than a rotten tree can bear good fruit (Matt. vii, 16-18, xii, 33) ; or that if men judge the state of the weather by observation, they should read "the signs of the times" in the same way (Luke xii, 54-56). It means that the conviction that God governs both the "natural" and the moral worlds by observable "laws" was fundamental to Jesus' thinking ; and that if the two worlds are governed by the same "law," the method of arriving at the truth about either world must also be the same. How has man won his knowledge of "nature" and his control over it ? Is it not by studying its laws ? No one expects to learn the meaning of weather-signs by special revelation ; it can only be done by careful observation and reflection on the observed facts. And to anyone who has learnt to do this, "miraculous signs" would be merely irrelevant. If you want to know God's truth, Jesus says, that is always the way to find it. But the demand for miraculous proofs, for "signs from heaven," is simply a demand for "short cuts" to truth that will save men the trouble of observing God's ways and reflecting on what they mean ; it is, therefore, disloyal to God. "Only an evil and unfaithful people asks for signs" (Matt. xii, 38-39, xvi, 1-4). So impressed was Jesus with men's attitude in this matter that He makes an apparently irrelevant

addition to the parable of Dives and Lazarus, expressly in order to emphasise its foolishness: "If they will not listen to Moses (the Law) and the Prophets, then they will remain unbelieving even though one appeared to them from the grave" (Luke xvi, 27-31). That is to say, the facts which might lead them to God's truth lay before them in the sacred Book where the spiritual experiences of the greatest men of their race were recorded. Jesus had proved their value for Himself.<sup>1</sup> If men would not study God's revelation where He meant them to find it, no miraculous intervention would be of any advantage. They would remain as "dull and slow of heart" as before.

This alert use of the understanding, with the sensitiveness to truth that it involves, was characteristic of all Jesus' own thinking. His warning to the disciples that they should fear not the persecutor but the tempter, shows how truly He had read human nature. He foresaw that the temptation to compromise with the Judaism that rejected Him would be a more insidious danger, both to them and the message entrusted to them, than open persecution, a wisdom that history abundantly justified (Luke xii, 1, 4-5). It is again a tribute to His insight that He so clearly foresaw and warned His contemporaries of the disaster towards which the nation was being carried.<sup>2</sup> All through the last months His mind was haunted by forebodings. "For these three years" says the master of the vineyard, "I have been looking for fruit in this tree

<sup>1</sup> pp. 48 f. *supra*.

<sup>2</sup> The whole series of incidents and warnings contained in Luke xii, 1-12, and xii, 34, to xiii, 9, are grouped together by Luke as references to the approaching catastrophe, "signs of the times."

<sup>3</sup> The period of Jesus' ministry?

in vain. Cut it down " (Luke xiii, 6-9). The Jews were being given a last opportunity, but it was vanishing unheeded. The door would soon be shut and then they would knock in vain (Luke xiii, 9, 25-27). This warning was occasioned by the report of the Galilean massacre—a manifest judgment of God, it was suggested. No, replies Jesus emphatically ; but it was a warning of what would happen to them all if they persisted in their present course (Luke xiii, 1-3).

As His own rejection became more certain, and He reflected how all down their history the Jewish people, in spite of their unique religious genius, the greatness of their prophets, and the opportunities they had been afforded, had repeatedly brought disaster on themselves by their indifference to new truth, Jesus became more and more deeply impressed by the fatal consequences of such indifference and the ease with which men fall into it. Only the utmost alertness and concentration could save them from missing their opportunities. Again and again He warns them to " be alert " (Mark xiii, 28, 33-37 ; Luke xii, 35-39 ; xvii, 26-37 ; xxi, 36 ; Matt. xxiv, 43-51 ; xxv, 13). If not, the Kingdom would steal on them " like a thief in the night."

The parable of the talents turns on one point—that all God's gifts, great or small, are given to be made use of at once. The servants who are commended are those who went " at once " and employed them to the full ; the " bad servant " is not punished for any active misuse of his talent, but only because he buries it unused (Matt. xxv, 14-30). The " foolish virgins " are ruined by sheer thoughtlessness (Matt. xxv, 1-12). All through these last

parables runs the same warning. It is not only wickedness that ruins men; the indifferent, the careless, the idle, whatever their natural gifts and however well-meaning they may be, can have no place in the Kingdom of God.

## CHAPTER III

### THE LAW OF LOVE—JESUS AND MAN

#### (i) *Jesus' Emphasis on the Duty of Relieving Need.*

IF we omit the account of the "Passion," the greater part of Mark's narrative is occupied with stories of "cures." The first and most powerful impression made on Jesus' followers was that He "went about doing good," restoring lost faculties, lost health and lost happiness to countless men and women. Indeed the records make it clear that, although He was fully aware that the central purpose of His life—the communicating of His revelation—was endangered thereby,<sup>1</sup> He preferred to run all risks rather than refuse to meet human need of any kind; and as He ultimately sacrificed His life for that revelation, this fact reveals more eloquently than any words the value that He set on such activities.

His teaching is equally emphatic. It is the helpless despair of the ruined debtor which impels the king to cancel the whole of an incredibly huge debt (Matt. xviii, 23-35). It is the need and anxiety of the labourers who have no work which prompts the owner of the vineyard to employ them all, regardless of the cost to himself (Matt. xx, 1-16). To relieve human need was one of the first laws

<sup>1</sup> See Part III, sec. ii, 4.

of discipleship (Luke xiv, 12-14, 21-24; Mark x, 21). In fact, so familiar were the claims of Jesus in this respect that Zacchæus knew without asking how to show his gratitude to Jesus in the most acceptable way: "Here are half of my possessions for the poor" (Luke xix, 8-9; cf. xii, 33). When challenged to define the meaning of "to love your neighbour as yourself," Jesus pictures a man finding a complete stranger lying robbed and wounded, and out of sheer pity rescuing him, attending to his wounds, carrying him to a place of shelter and paying for his expenses. This alone would serve to illustrate the value that He sets on generous and practical sympathy. But an even more striking proof is to be found in the famous parable of the sheep and the goats. This story is, according to Matthew (to whom it is peculiar), the last recorded public utterance of Jesus. It was spoken under the most unusual circumstances and in great tension of spirit. While still in enjoyment of the full powers of early manhood, Jesus was confronted with the call to sacrifice His life deliberately for the sake of His "Gospel"; His arrest and execution were now a matter of days only; and this might be His last opportunity to remind the people of what constituted the essence of the message for which He was dying. And as if to emphasise its importance to the utmost, Jesus places it in the setting of the Great Judgment. To His hearers this scene was no mere literary imagery; it represented a burning conviction that, in vindication of His righteousness, all the unimaginable purposes of God working through the ages "from the foundation of the world" were to culminate in a stupendous catastrophe, at which the whole race of mankind would

be arraigned before the Judgment-seat of God. To this crisis all history moved; from it man's everlasting future would flow. "And I watched till the throne of Judgment was set up and the Ancient of Days sat thereon. . . His throne was one blaze of fire, and its wheels of burning flame; a flame of fire streamed from His presence. Unnumbered angels served Him, millions upon millions waited on His bidding. The Judgment was prepared and the records were opened" (Dan. vii, 9 f., cf. Rev. xx, 11-15). Jesus was aware of this sublime conception: but as it was usually associated with an idea of God which He believed to be mistaken, He had hitherto avoided using its imagery in public. But now He deliberately recalls the familiar picture: in the centre the blazing throne, behind it, rank upon rank, the assembled angels; before it all the generations of man stand hushed to listen. Into the very centre of this scene Jesus Himself steps; and then, anticipating His Judgment as God's mouthpiece upon mankind, from the great silence He speaks. "The King will say to those on His right hand: Come with My Father's blessing, and inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the creation of the world. For I was hungry, and you fed Me, thirsty and you gave Me drink, a stranger and you sheltered Me, ragged and you clothed Me, sick and you tended Me, in prison and you visited Me." On the left hand are those who have failed thus to serve "one of the least of these my brothers"; and for that sole failure they are banished for ever from the presence of God (Matt. xxv, 31-46). This then is the sum of the message which, under the most impressive circumstances, and in the most impressive imagery at His com-

mand, Jesus delivers to the Jews before they kill Him: that the ultimate test by which men will be judged before the throne of God is the spirit of self-forgetful love responding to human need and suffering. Jesus was well aware that the test would appear to most men irrelevant; both classes alike meet the sentence with amazement and incredulity. Nevertheless Jesus leaves that as His final word.<sup>1</sup> Dives, in the parable, is banished to "hell" for the same failure. Nothing is said of any active wickedness on his part; but he lives in ease and comfort without feeling any call to concern himself with the sick beggar Lazarus, and that decides his fate<sup>2</sup> (Luke xvi, 19 f.). It was again this indifference to need and suffering and refusal to welcome their relief that Jesus called the "unforgiveable sin" of the Pharisees<sup>3</sup> (Mark iii, 22-30; cf. Mark ii, 23 ff.). And it is noteworthy that the one thing that is recorded to have moved Jesus to anger was callous disregard of other people's

<sup>1</sup> The emphasis laid in this section on the importance of being sensitive to human need is not intended to imply that relief of physical suffering is the only or even the most important duty of Christ's followers (see F. A. Cockin, *Studies in the Christian Character*, Study III). What the parable suggests is rather that these are the most obvious and elementary forms of the service of Love; if a man is blind or insensitive to these he will hardly be alive to the less obvious appeals of Love, however profound. The cardinal point is that the source of the evil that damns men is self-centred and callous indifference to others, what redeems them is that acute and generous sensitiveness to which all that harms others is intolerable; and this was a complete reversal of current apocalyptic standards. The fundamental issue is stated at greater length on pp. 99-101 *infra*.

<sup>2</sup> This interpretation is only an inference from the contrast between the neglected state of Lazarus and the ostentatious luxury of Dives. Many critics, however, consider that the parable illustrates the point raised not in ver. 13 of Luke xvi, but in ver. 15.

<sup>3</sup> See p. 131 *infra*.



feelings or needs (Mark iii, 1-6 ; x, 13-16 ; Luke xiii, 15 ; ix. 54-55).

The stories of "miraculous feeding" gain new meaning when seen from this approach. For whatever we make of their details the fact remains that, according to a unanimous tradition, Jesus refused to let the crowds go away hungry, and found some unusual means of feeding them (Mark vi, 35-44 ; viii, 1-10). In the Fourth Gospel the first thought that strikes Jesus on seeing the crowds is how they are to be fed (John vi, 1-13). These stories were accepted by the early Christian Society ; it was at least just the kind of thing that Jesus would have done (cf. also Mark v, 43 ; Luke iv, 25-26 ; vi, 20-21 ; xi, 3 ; Mark ii, 18-20, 23-27).

It is thus clear that Jesus, unlike so many of His greatest followers, refused to tolerate any of these forms of suffering and disablement. To realise the full significance of this it is necessary to remember who He claimed to be. For if Jesus, acting throughout as the Representative of God sent to achieve the realisation of God's will on earth, consistently set Himself to banish such things from human life, it must have been because He believed their continued existence to be contrary to the will of God and no part of His Kingdom.

## (ii) *Jesus and the Social Outcasts.*

Jesus admitted no barriers to human sympathy. His own genius for friendship led him to feel profoundly for all those classes of persons to whom social advantages were denied.

His behaviour towards the "publicans and sinners" was a source of frequent and bitter criticism (Mark ii, 15-17 ; Luke vii, 34 ; xv, 1 f.).

Nor is this surprising. All their most intense religious and patriotic feelings united to make the foreign rule—particularly the rule of an alien and idolatrous race—intolerably galling to the “Chosen People” who were to “inherit the earth.” The collection of the poll-tax (the visible sign of Roman authority and Jewish subjection) in the time of Augustus (cf. Luke ii, 1 and 2) had led to serious rioting and bloodshed in Galilee.<sup>1</sup> The odium naturally vented itself on the men of Jewish race who collected such taxes. Moreover a certain amount of unpopularity generally attaches itself to those who collect State dues; and this was greatly aggravated by the notoriously unscrupulous methods of the *publicani* throughout the Roman Empire.<sup>2</sup> The “publicans” were therefore classed contemptuously with the “sinners” as the extreme social outcasts. Jesus, men found to their surprise and contempt, made no attempt to conceal His sympathy for either class; indeed a “publican” was a member of His inner circle of intimate friends. He was nicknamed “the friend of tax-gatherers and sinners,” and the sneer clung. It would be a great mistake, however, to suppose that His relations with persons of this class were all as pleasant and fortunate as those with Matthew and Zacchæus. That His contact with them brought Him some very different experiences is hinted at in the painful irony of His advice: “Do not throw

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Josephus, *Antiquities*, Bk. xviii, ch. i ff.

<sup>2</sup> And of course the Jews were grossly over-taxed. Not only had they to pay the usual taxes to the Romans and Herod (in themselves a severe burden), but they had also to pay the even more numerous and heavy tithes and other dues to the Temple priests and Levites. Though the latter could not be legally enforced, the orthodox Jew naturally regarded them as a first and more binding duty.

your pearls to swine . . . they will only trample on them and then turn and rend you" (Matt. vii, 6). Some natures would appear to be so "animal" that they are incapable of appreciating what does not minister to their sensual appetites. Offer them the most priceless treasures of your mind and they will imagine that it must be something to satisfy those appetites; when they find they are mistaken they will spurn your gifts and turn on you in a fury of disappointment. Such experiences must have left a deep mark on the most religious man who ever trod this earth. It was therefore something far more deep and compelling than a mere love of easy companionship that sent Jesus among "the dregs of society." He suffered from no illusions about their real character.

And yet He leaves us in no doubt regarding His own opinion as to which class was "nearer the Kingdom of God." He openly defended the outcasts against the attacks of respectable orthodoxy, asserting repeatedly that they were more often justified in the sight of God than their proud and self-satisfied critics<sup>1</sup> (Luke vii, 29-30; xv, 11-32; Matt. xxi, 28-32; xxii, 1-14).

The reasons for this startling reversal of the common opinion are summed up and pointed in two unforgettable sentences. The first is the ending to the parable of the lost sheep: "There is more gladness in Heaven over one 'sinner' who turns to God than over ninety-nine 'respectable' persons who 'have nothing to repent of'" (Luke xv, 7, 10); the other is the parable of the Pharisee

<sup>1</sup> So in the parable of "the sheep and the goats" it is the latter who are satisfied with themselves; but their fancied superiority is based on a false sense of values ("righteousness").

and the publican, a masterpiece of brevity and irony (Luke xviii, 9-14; cf. also Luke vii, 47; 1 Cor. xiii, 1-7).

But Jesus' actual relations with the outcasts are a better illustration of His character than any comment; and before going on it will be worth while to recall three typical incidents.

Jesus is on His way to Jerusalem to die. By the time He reaches Jericho there is a large crowd following Him. An unpopular publican named Zacchæus, who has amassed considerable wealth by his exactions, is then living in the town. Hearing that Jesus is coming, and wishing to see a man who has the reputation of being sympathetic to his class, he goes out to wait on the road along which Jesus is expected to pass, but is too short to see over the crowd. He therefore runs on in advance and climbs a tree. As Jesus passes He glances up and sees the quaint little figure of the publican perched in the tree and gazing down at Him, and in his face an unspoken but wistful request. In the full tide of popular favour and acclamation Jesus stands still and, in the silence that follows, to the amazement and disgust<sup>1</sup> of the crowd, asks Zacchæus if He may enjoy his hospitality for the day; adding, with humorous appreciation of the picture made by the elderly, well-dressed little man clinging uncomfortably to his precarious seat: "Make haste and come down, Zacchæus, and invite me in" (Luke xix, 1-10).

The second incident is one that has found its way into John's narrative. Jesus is sitting one morning in the Temple Court, when some Scribes break in on Him; they have found a woman in the

<sup>1</sup> διεγέργυσον—a "buzz" of protest.

act of adultery, and in triumph they bring her to Jesus. The Mosaic Law condemned her to death by stoning, forbidding that any mercy should be shown in such cases. It was, says the recorder, a direct challenge ; for they knew of Jesus' sympathy for the "sinners," and for women ; they also knew that He had criticised the harshness of the old Law. The offender is dragged before Him, while her accusers stand round watching Jesus. "Rabbi," they say, "here is a woman caught in the act of adultery ; the Law of Moses commands us to stone her ; what do you say ? (They said this in order to trap him.)" Jesus watches them—the men in jeering triumph, the woman ashamed, desperate and shrinking ; and His manhood revolts at the cruel scene. "He bent down and began writing with His finger on the ground, as though He did not hear." But when they insist on an answer He looks up : "If there is anyone here (He says) who has never gone wrong himself, let him throw the first stone," and then He resumes His former attitude. Silently, in shame, first one slinks away and then another, until the woman stands alone. At last Jesus draws Himself up. "Where are all your accusers ?" He asks. "Has none of them condemned you ?" "No, Rabbi," she whispers, "not one." "And I do not either. Go your way ; but do not sin again" (John viii, 1-11).

One more incident : perhaps the most perfect of its kind in history. Jesus has been invited by a Pharisee to a meal ; apparently out of curiosity to see the peasant prophet who is being so much discussed, for Jesus is received casually with none of the usual courtesies. There is a notorious prostitute in the town. As the meal progresses there is

a sudden stir. We can picture the indignant face of the host freezing into a contemptuous stare as this public prostitute passes silently down the room with an emblem of her trade, a jar of costly ointment, till she reaches Jesus where He sits among the guests. Then bursting into tears, she bends over His feet, kissing them again and again, and wiping them with her hair. Blinded by her tears, she cannot see to open the jar, so she breaks it and pours the perfume over Jesus' feet. Even then the others think it must be a mistake; and Simon mutters to himself: "He can hardly be a genuine prophet, this Jesus, or he would know what sort of person she is who is touching him." Jesus, who sits watching it all, reads his thought. He draws a grudging admission from Simon that it is natural for one who has been forgiven much to love much. And the woman's gratitude was at least a moving contrast to Simon's studied lack of courtesy! "So I tell you that her sins—yes, her 'many' sins—are all forgiven, because of her great love." "Your faith has saved you," he assures the woman; "go, and happiness go with you" (Luke vii, 36 f.).

(iii) *Jesus and the Samaritans.*

"The Jews," says the Fourth Gospel, "have no dealings with the Samaritans" (John iv, 9). The Samaritans appear to have been the descendants of old Israelitish families who had intermarried, in defiance of the Mosaic Law, with the mixed colony of aliens planted in Samaria after the destruction of "the Northern Kingdom" in 722 B.C. by the Assyrians. They had caused trouble to the

restored Judean exiles after the return from captivity (Ezra iv, 7 f.; Neh. iv, 2 f.), and since then there had been continual feuds between them and the Jews. The ordinary Jew hated and despised the Samaritans. But they met with the same friendliness and sympathy from Jesus as the outcasts. His absolute freedom from prejudice surprised those who did not know Him. As He sits by the well at Sychar alone a Samaritan woman comes to draw water. Seeing that He is a Jew, she takes it as a matter of course that she will be ignored. She is therefore surprised to hear a friendly voice saying: "Will you give me a drink?" "What!" she exclaims, stopping in wonder, "You, a Jew, asking a Samaritan woman for a drink!" Why not? Jesus answers. Had they not each of them needs which the other could satisfy; and did not that make such prejudices irrelevant? (John iv, 4 f.). It was a Samaritan that Jesus deliberately chose as the embodiment of the true "neighbour,"<sup>1</sup> in a parable told (apparently) to a Scholar of the Law at the headquarters of Judaism in the presence of the Jewish leaders (Luke x, 25 f., with Mark xii, 28 f.). This tribute is the more chivalrous in that Jesus, during His journey to Jerusalem, had been abruptly refused hospitality by Samaritan villagers at the end of a long day's journey (Luke ix, 51 f.). So surprising and unnatural did Jesus' sympathy appear that His exasperated countrymen repudiated Him as "a madman, a Samaritan!" (John viii, 48).

<sup>1</sup> In Lev. xix, 18, "neighbour" is deliberately equated with "the children of thy people," i.e. a brother Israelite. Jesus as deliberately rejects this limitation (contrast Luke x, 31, 32, with ver. 33).

(iv) *Jesus and the Gentiles.*

When Jesus told his countrymen that they must love their "enemies" and pray for their "persecutors," He knew that Judea and Galilee had long been seething with hatred of their alien rulers, and that the whole story of their relations with Rome and Herod was stained with blood. Could any of His hearers have missed the full significance of His words? Moreover, when publicly challenged by His opponents regarding the payment of tribute, Jesus did not hesitate to advise them to give freely to the Roman ruler all that was "his due" (Mark xii, 17). Hellenistic influences were prevalent in Galilee, which was one reason why the stricter Judeans despised the Galileans. There are hints that Jesus was at least not antagonistic to them. More than one of the Twelve had a Greek name (Peter, Philip, Didymus) (Mark iii, 16-19; John xi, 16); and it was one of them, Philip, who, according to the Fourth Gospel, brought the enquiring Greeks to Jesus in Jerusalem (John xii, 20 f.). Another noteworthy fact is that all the Old Testament stories quoted by Jesus concern "Gentiles," and that in each case they are contrasted favourably with "the Chosen Race" (Matt. xii, 41 f.; cf. Matt. xvi, 4; Luke iv, 24-27; Matt. viii, 10). Men shall come "from the East and from the West," Jesus declared, and find a home in the Kingdom, while "the children of the Kingdom" (the Jews) would be shut out (Matt. viii, 11-12; Luke xiii, 29; cf. Mark xii, 9). It was this thought that occupied His mind as He stood watching the profanation of the Temple shortly before His death (cf. p. 52 *supra*).



*(v) Jesus and Women.*

Although the Jewish attitude towards women was not an ignoble one, they were nevertheless in a definite position of inferiority, and one of the synagogue prayers contained a thanksgiving for men that they were not born women. St. Paul himself, though he declares that all such differences between the sexes have been abolished by Christ, reveals many traces of the prevailing Jewish conception.

There is no hint of any such prejudices in the mind of Jesus. This is evident in the devotion that He inspired (e.g., Luke vii, 36 f.; Mark xiv, 3-9; John xx, 11-18). Certain women disciples followed Him through Galilee to Jerusalem and (though the twelve had deserted Him) to the cross and the grave; and it comes with no sense of surprise that the first intimation of the resurrection should have been given to women, or that the simplest and most moving of the resurrection stories concerned Mary of Magdala (Mark xvi, 1 f.; Matt. xxvii, 61; xxviii, 1-10; Luke xxiii, 55 f.; John xx, 11-18). There was no trace of embarrassment or condescension in this companionship (e.g., John iv, 5 f.), and Jesus accepted the services of the women as frankly and readily as He did those of the men (Luke viii, 1-3). He healed women as freely as He healed men (e.g., Mark i, 30; v, 22 f.), defying the synagogue authorities as readily to cure the crippled woman as the palsied man; indeed hers is one of the very few cases in which He went out of His way to cure a person unasked: "When Jesus saw her, he called her . . ."—in the synagogue, on the Sabbath day, and with His enemies watching

(Luke xiii, 10 f.). He reveals a peculiar sympathy for the poor and the widowed (Luke xv, 8 f.; Mark xii, 41 f.; Luke vii, 11; cf. also Mark xii, 42; Mark x, 13; Matt. xix, 3-6); His mother was a widow.

(vi) *Jesus and Children.*

The records contain only a few references to children; but they are all the more illuminating for being incidental. The first disciples, it is clear, had no room for children in their scheme of life; and the same might be said of St. Paul and of most of the leading figures of the early Church. The Twelve could not understand how their Master, who as Messiah had so many weighty matters to occupy His attention, could find time for what was after all so irrelevant to them. When therefore some mothers brought their children to Jesus, the disciples told them impatiently to leave Him alone. They have recorded Jesus' indignation when He heard it, and the way in which He turned and took the children in His arms and blessed them (Mark x, 13-16). At the time, however, they did not grasp the real meaning of the incident; for later on Jesus has to express it even more plainly. The disciples were arguing as to which of them was the most important: "And Jesus took a little child . . . and putting his arms round him, He said: 'The greatest member of God's Kingdom is the one who stoops to become a little child like this. Anyone who welcomes such a child is thereby welcoming me; and to welcome me is to welcome the God Who sent me'" (Mark ix, 33-37; Matt. xviii, 1-5). So far are children from being irrelevant to the great issues, that a kindness done to one of

them is felt as a personal favour by God Himself. "Beware of despising any of these little ones," Jesus adds, for so near are they to the heart of God that their guardian angels have always direct access to Him, their needs are His immediate care (Matt. xviii, 10). To hurt a little child, to ruin the spirit of childhood, is therefore an unspeakable wrong: "I am sorry for the man who is guilty of such a thing; it would be far better for him to be lying drowned with a millstone round his neck" (Luke xvii, 1-2).

After the triumphal entry into Jerusalem bands of children were found in the Temple singing praises to Jesus. It was a fitting tribute (Matt. xxi, 15).

(vii) *Jesus and Human Happiness.*

If Jesus was sensitive to men's needs, He was no less responsive to their happiness. He appreciated the nobility of asceticism, but indicated plainly that it was not His choice (Luke vii, 33-35). It belongs to another and lower plane of life. Jesus loved the crowds, and was at home with men of every sort and degree. He "piped a merry tune" (so He describes His message), inviting them to dance to it with the gaiety and abandon of happy children at play (Luke vii, 32). Bitter opposition and hatred drove Jesus into treading a path that has earned for Him the name of "the Man of Sorrows"; but His actual message was one of incredible joy—"God's good news" He called it. "Glad" tidings of "great joy" was the burden of the angels' song that announced His birth (Luke ii, 10); and in spite of persecution His followers caught the accent of that "new song" (Rev. v, 9, 10). Like the poor man who

unexpectedly discovers a hidden treasure, like the merchant who at last finds the pearl of great price, once men have seen the Kingdom of Heaven "for joy thereof" they will give all they have in the world to possess it (Matt. xiii, 44-46). But it is to the wedding feast that Jesus turns most naturally for a fitting picture of that happiness. When His disciples are criticised for not fasting, He replies that it would be as absurd for them to fast in His company as to appear fasting at a wedding banquet (Mark ii, 18-20). It was not that Jesus condemned fasting altogether (Matt vi, 16-18); what He does assert is that such sadness could not be found in His company. The father's joy over the prodigal's return finds spontaneous expression in feasting and mirth, in music and dancing; and he justifies himself in the face of criticism with the considered assertion: "It is right to make merry and be glad" (Luke xv, 11-32). God's appeal to the Jews through Jesus is like an invitation to the "marriage feast" of "a king's son" (Matt. xxii, 2). To forfeit a place in the Kingdom, to see it and realise what they have missed too late, will fill men with a sense of overwhelming loss, of utter despair—the despair of "the outer darkness where there is wailing and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. xxii, 13; Luke xiii, 25-28; cf. Matt. viii, 11 and 12). It is curious how often that metaphor recurs to Jesus' mind in this connection. Had some such experience in His childhood left an ineffaceable trace of its misery on His mind? For the "foolish virgins" also are invited to a "wedding feast"; they too are forbidden by their careless discourtesy from sharing the festivities; they too are shut out in the darkness (Matt. xxv, 1-12).

It is evident that the companionship and sociability of the table made a particular appeal to Jesus. His enemies openly accused Him of self-indulgence (Luke vii, 34 ; xv, 2). Levi celebrates his call by giving a feast in Jesus' honour (Mark ii, 15 f.). Jesus was equally ready to dine with the Pharisees (Luke xi, 37 ; xiv, 1), and was evidently no stranger at their more important banquets (Luke xiv, 7). In fact He anticipates that the Jews who are refused entrance to the Kingdom will reply : " But we have sat at the same table with you "—taking it as a matter of course that the mere fact of having shared meals with Him will be admitted by Jesus as a claim on His friendship (Luke xiii, 26). The account of " the last Supper " is particularly illuminating. Jesus took elaborate precautions to see that this last meal with the disciples should be free from interruption (Mark xiv, 12-16). He looked forward to it with keen longing (Luke xxii, 15). And He makes it the symbol of the perfecting of their friendship in the new world—as though the memory of their meals together had come to represent in His mind all their happiest and most intimate companionship (Mark xiv, 25 ; Luke xxii, 28-30). The promise was never forgotten (Rev. iii, 20 ; xix, 9). This would explain the fact that the one ceremony by which Jesus is recorded to have personally requested the disciples to celebrate His memory was a common meal <sup>1</sup> (1 Cor. xi, 23-25 ; Luke xxii, 19).

(viii) *The Significance of the Call to Self-Sacrifice.*

Such was the man who deliberately summoned

<sup>1</sup> Originally, of course, " the Lord's Supper " was a real meal. Cf. 1 Cor. xi, 20-22, 33-34.

His followers to a life of suffering that was to end on the cross. This austere claim comes therefore with the whole weight of His personality, His gospel of happiness, and His faith in God. It seems strange that Jesus should devote His life to the banishment of suffering from the world, only to demand it in its most extreme form from His disciples. But in reality nothing could more impressively illustrate the conviction with which Jesus held His gospel of the absolute supremacy of Love. "Blessed are those who suffer *for the sake of righteousness*"<sup>1</sup> (Matt. v, 10). If the purpose of human life is to co-operate with God in the bringing in of His Kingdom, the spirit of Love must be created where it does not exist. It is therefore in the existence of what opposes Love, and in the painful effort and self-sacrifice by which alone good can be created out of evil, that the necessity for suffering lies. The Kingdom can never be furthered by meeting hatred with hatred. For hatred will inevitably breed more hatred and wrong more wrong, in an ever-widening circle and a deepening intensity; and as the spirit of hatred increases, Love will inevitably be destroyed. The only way of escape from this vicious circle is for someone to have the courage to break it. Someone must refuse to let Love be overcome by bitterness, whatever he may suffer; even in the bitter fires of persecution kindness and forgiveness must triumph over resentment. And further, since the supreme concern of the member of the Kingdom is to do good to others, if his help is needed, however rudely it is demanded, he will not refuse; on

<sup>1</sup> Righteousness may be defined as a right relationship to God and man.

the contrary, he will go beyond what is asked of him, thereby proving that he is acting not out of fear or self-interest, but only from a sincere and generous desire to be of service. This creative activity of Love has never been more effectively expressed than in those shrewd and humorous pictures by which Jesus brought home His high and exacting moral demands to a peasant audience. If a man strikes you on the face, do not lose your temper—or your sense of humour—offer him the other cheek! If a government servant “impresses” you to carry his baggage for one mile, surprise him by carrying it for two! If a man demands your coat, offer him your shirt as well! (Contrast Luke iii, 11). They would be churlish indeed if such good-humour and friendliness did not make them good-humoured and friendly too (Matt. v, 39-42). With such a spirit men can not merely make Love triumphant in themselves but can create it in others also. The Cross is only this spirit of service from the motive of self-forgetful Love carried to its highest point. It is such suffering (though suffering of this kind alone), deliberately accepted for the sake of God’s reign on earth, that purifies and redeems the life of man. But the demand for courage and generosity could go no further.

(ix) *Reckless Generosity an Essential Activity of Love.*

And yet this magnificent and reckless generosity is an essential activity of Love as Jesus conceived it. “Generously have you received; give as generously” (Matt. x, 8; Luke vi, 30). “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts xx, 35). “Never be critical . . . never condemn others.

. . . Devote yourselves to setting others free. . . . Be generous and men will respond generously" (Luke vi, 37-38). A man's greatness is measured not by what he can get, but what he gives (Mark ix, 35 ; x, 35 f. ; cf. Matt. xx, 1-16 ; xxv, 31 f. ; Luke x, 29 f. ; Luke xv, etc.). Always be ready to forgive, Jesus tells them again and again. "How often?" asks Peter, in a glow of enthusiasm; "Seven times?"<sup>1</sup> "Seven times!" replies Jesus. "No! Seventy times seven" (Matt. xviii, 21 f.). It was this magnanimity that Jesus admired perhaps more than any other quality in the actions He witnessed (Luke vii, 44-50 ; Mark xii, 44 ; Mark xiv, 9, with John xii, 1-8 ; Luke xix, 8, 9).

(x) *Love the Key to Jesus' Teaching on Wealth.*

The pre-eminence of this generous Love is, again, the key to all Jesus' teaching about riches. To claim that the whole of a man's wealth should be devoted to relieving the poor was applying the command to love one's neighbour "in bitter earnest" indeed. His unflinching realism appalled the disciples (Mark x, 21-26 ; cf. Luke xii, 33). And yet Jesus refuses to lower His demands. If men wish to "serve mammon," if they believe that material wealth and prosperity represent the highest value, then they must devote themselves to working for it. But if they desire to "serve God," then everything else, including wealth, must be used for the preservation and increase of the treasures of the spirit. It is useless to try and do both (Matt. vi, 19-24). What Jesus means by serving God and not "mammon" is explained in

<sup>1</sup> Seven is, of course, an "ideal" number. Cf. Luke viii, 2 ; Mark xvi, 9 ; Luke xvii, 4.



the parable of the Unjust Steward (Luke xvi, 1-9). He characteristically takes an extreme case—an unscrupulous “man of the world” who is discovered cheating and who, when faced with ruin, uses his last hours of authority to win the friendship of his master’s debtors by reducing their bills. Jesus Himself points the moral: “Use the mammon of unrighteousness to make friends.” Cynic and opportunist though he be, even the dishonest steward is driven in the last resort to recognise that the real value of money consists in its power to create good-will and friendliness. Money is only of value because it represents the power to obtain something else that is desired—comfort, pleasure, idleness, prestige, influence; to Jesus it is of value as a means of creating the spirit of Love.

(xi) *The Importance of Motive.*

Nor will Jesus acknowledge any other motive even for this generosity than Love. When Peter points out that they (unlike so many others) have left all and followed Him, Jesus replies that no one can give up anything for the sake of the Gospel and the Messiah of God without being immeasurably enriched by his sacrifice. But (He adds pointedly) some of “the most exalted” will find themselves in the lowest place of all; for a hint of self-seeking in the sacrifice will spoil it (Mark x, 28-31; cf. Matt. vi, 1-4; Mark ix, 33 f.; x, 35 f.). Was not the failing on which Jesus laid his finger when criticising the Scribes and Pharisees that their religion was too much dominated by self-consciousness and self-interest? “As for you, do not even let your left hand know what your right hand does” (Matt. vi, 3). Do everything that you ought

to do, He says again, and then say to yourselves : "Our service is of no merit to us ; we have merely done what we were bound to do" (Luke xvii, 7-10). St. Paul's daring paradox : "Even though I do 'give all that I possess to feed the poor,' yes, even though I do suffer martyrdom, if my motive is not love my sacrifice is utterly worthless," touches the heart of Jesus' gospel. In the phrases, "the faith that can move mountains" (v. 2) ; "the giving of all that a man has to the poor" (v. 3) and the sacrificing of one's life on the cross (or at the stake) for "the faith" (v. 3), St. Paul is deliberately choosing three sayings that were evidently much quoted not only as Jesus' own words but as duties of supreme importance for the Christian ; they were recognised as three corner stones of Christ's teaching. With magnificent audacity and insight St. Paul declares them to be "nothing at all" without the one essential—the Christ Love (1 Cor. xiii, 2, with Mark x, 21 ; viii, 34 ; xi, 22-23).

(xii) *Love the Touchstone of Life.*

This generous self-forgetful Love is the very touchstone of life (Mark xii, 29-31). Failure to recognise it sets even the noblest of characters below the least worthy of those who acknowledge it (Matt. xi, 11). The rejection of it inevitably alienates a man from God (e.g., Mark iii, 22-30 ; Matt. xxiii, 14 f.). And therefore whenever a wrong has been committed or received, reconciliation becomes a duty of instant and vital importance. It is mockery for a man to approach God with a gift if he previously wronged another and left his victim with a rankling sense of injury which makes it difficult to be friendly or generous. "Go and be

reconciled first ; then you can return and offer your gift " (Matt. v, 23-24). Unreadiness to accept such reconciliation when it is offered is equally fatal (Mark xi, 25). If you refuse to be reconciled to others, God will not be reconciled to you : how can a man live on terms of intimacy with the God of Love while he is cherishing hatred and bitterness in his own heart ? (Matt. vi, 15). The fate of those who persist in such a course is indicated in the famous parable of the king who, when he found the subject to whom he had forgiven a huge debt callously exacting a small debt of his own, indignantly consigned him to " the tormentors " (Matt. xviii, 28-35).

There is nothing in these sayings inconsistent with the Gospel. In refusing the spirit of forgiveness men are of their own free will withdrawing themselves from the influence of righteousness and Love and submitting to the control of the spirit of hatred, contempt and selfishness. The effects of such a choice are " writ large " across the whole history of mankind. As no one can be compelled to love, God leaves men free to choose which master they will serve. But there can be no escaping the consequences of their choice. Though Love is the master-word of Jesus' revelation, it is a Love that will not tolerate a hint of compromise regarding the absolute righteousness of God and His demand for perfect righteousness on the part of men. It is only " the pure in heart " who truly " see God." Sin, harshness, self-centredness are alienation from God, Who is the source of all life and all good ; an alienation that is indeed " the outer darkness " ; a darkness that is all the more terrible because God is Love.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE LAW OF LOVE—JESUS AND GOD

- (i) "*Love your Enemies*" as the Key to Jesus' Revelation of God.

"THIS is the greatest of all the commandments : Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole self" (Mark xii, 28-30). If Jesus came to preach the gospel of Love, He did so as the Revealer of God. It is God Who is supreme Love. This conviction Jesus proclaims in the most astonishing utterance in the history of religion : "*Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, in order that you may be true children of your Father in Heaven, Who makes His sun rise on the evil as well as the good, and sends His rain on the righteous and unrighteous alike. For you are to be perfect with the perfection of your Heavenly Father*" (Matt. v, 38-48). "What merit is it only to love those who love you ? . . . To help only those who help you ? . . . To lend only to those from whom you hope for a return ? . . . No ; you must love your enemies, and help them. . . . *Then your reward will be great : you will be true sons of the Most High, Who is good to the ungrateful and the wicked. You must be full of pity, like your Heavenly Father*" (Luke vi, 27-36). In making these claims upon His followers Jesus offers one reason and justification : that in so doing they will be proving themselves

true children of God. As we reflect on Jesus' words we are held in amazement by what they imply. If to meet rudeness with unfailing courtesy ; demands, however insolent, with a generosity that goes far beyond what is asked ; hatred with love ; cursing with blessing ; ingratitude with unfailing kindness ; brutality and injury by pleading for those who are guilty of the wrong—if to act thus is to show a family likeness to God (Matt. v, 45 ; Luke vi, 35) then it follows that *these are the most characteristic activities of God, the very secret of the Divine perfection* (Matt. v, 48). And as we study Jesus' life and thought, the realisation forces itself upon us that this conviction is indeed to Him the supreme truth, the source of all His principles, all His beliefs, all His activities. Whatever opinion we may hold as to its truth, the characteristically lucid and uncompromising profession of Jesus' faith sets the issue clear and unmistakable for all time. Love is the Divine Spirit ; this is the secret of the Gospel.

(ii) *The Contrast with the Old Testament Conception of God.*

To the Old Testament Jews, God was Jchovah, the "Holy One of Israel," Whose very name they trembled to utter. Even to the greatest of the prophets<sup>1</sup> He remained such a Being, utterly righteous indeed and full of compassion for His people when they "turned to Him and hearkened to His voice," but always the God of Judgment and terrible in His anger against His enemies (cf. Jer. li, 56 ; Nahum i, 2, etc.).

<sup>1</sup> Hosea must be excepted. In spite of the occasional violence of his language (e.g. xiii, 7-8) he comes nearer to divining the secret than any other O.T. writer, except the unknown author of Isa. lvi.

It is the author of the tender and beautiful Drama of the Redemption of Jehovah's people who, with the exquisite words "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I (God) comfort you" on his lips, continues: "The Lord will have indignation upon *His enemies*. For behold the Lord will come with fire, and His chariots shall be like whirlwinds; to render His anger with scorching heat, His rebuke with flames of fire. For the Lord will execute judgment upon the world with fire and sword" (Is. lxvi, 14-16). Another passage included in the same book by Jewish compilers draws a magnificent and terrible picture of Jehovah as He returns from executing such a judgment upon "the enemy of the Lord" (Is. lxiii, 1-6).<sup>1</sup> It is the sensitive-hearted Jeremiah, most human of prophets, he whose message to Jehovah's people was "Go and proclaim these words: Return, O backsliding Israel, return to me, saith the Lord, and I will not look in anger upon you, for I am a merciful God" (Jer. iii, 12-13)—it is this prophet who turns to the disloyal people with the words: "This is the sentence of God: Behold my anger and fury shall be poured out upon this place, upon man and upon beast, upon the trees of the field and the fruit of the ground; and it shall burn and shall never be quenched" (Jer. vii, 20); and who sees this vision of the earth when Jehovah's devastating judgment has been accomplished: "I looked upon the earth, and lo it was waste and void; at the heavens and their light was gone. I looked upon the mountains and lo they trembled, and all the hills shook to and fro; I looked and lo

<sup>1</sup> Contrast Isa. lxiii, 1-6 with 7-9; Isa. xxxiv with xxxv, etc.

there was no man to be seen, the very birds of the air had fled; the fruitful tree was a wilderness and all the cities thereof had fallen in ruins—at the presence of the Lord and before His fierce anger” (Jer. iv, 23 f.).

When John the Baptist, the last of the old prophets, came preaching in the wilderness it was this conception that he reaffirmed. “Viper’s brood! Who has warned you to flee from the impending wrath? Even now the axe is laid to the root of the tree, and every tree that does not bear fruit shall be cut down and thrown into the fire. . . . He who comes after me will baptise you with the Spirit and with fire; his fan is in his hand and he will winnow the threshing floor to the last grain . . . and the chaff he will burn in unquenchable flame” (Matt. iii, 7-12).<sup>1</sup>

There could be no more impressive illustration of the truth of Jesus’ brilliant summary of the Old Testament teaching: “Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy” than the study of these great prophets. It was not only the heroes and saints, it was first and foremost the God of the Old Testament who loved His friends and hated His enemies. In spite of all the patience and tenderness lavished on His chosen people by Jehovah, in spite of the “lovingkindness” of His dealings with the righteous, in spite even of hints and foreshadowings of a great hope that would embrace all the nations of the earth, the attitude of Jehovah to His avowed enemies remained one of relentless anger and vengeance.<sup>2</sup> It was left

<sup>1</sup> Contrast the character and the activities of God implied in John’s words with Matt. v, 38-48.

<sup>2</sup> iv Ezra supplies an illuminating and pathetic comment.

for Jesus to bring the incredible, undreamed-of message of a God Whose Love and humour and pity never fail.

(iii) *Jesus' Name for God.*

Many years before John had appeared with his message of Judgment, the boy Jesus had been found in the Temple questioning the great Rabbis about God. "Did you not realise," He asks his surprised and anxious parents, "that I must be in my Father's house?" (Luke ii, 42-50). That "Father" Whose charm and attractiveness had held the boy of twelve spellbound was God. When Jesus came to inaugurate His mission He seldom mentioned God by the former names, as though He feared that the old associations might be too strong. God on His lips is "the Father," "my Father," "your Heavenly Father." But even that word had dangerous associations; there were earthly fathers who suggested very different thoughts; and so when Jesus has had time to teach His followers something of the new meaning of the word, He actually suggests that they should give up using it of their natural fathers and reserve it for God alone (Matt. xxiii, 9). Even amid the unearthly splendours of the Judgment scene the familiar name slips out (Matt. xxv, 34). In the garden of Gethsemane Jesus appeals to God as "Abba"—my Father (Mark xiv, 36). "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit" are His last recorded words on the cross. The words are taken from a Hebrew psalm; but the name is His own (Luke xxiii, 46; cf. Mark i, 11; viii, 38; ix, 7; Matt. vi, 4-18; vii, 21; x, 20; Luke xxii, 29, etc.).



*(iv) His Dependence upon God.*

In the great discourse Jesus sets out the positive principles implied in His rejection of contemporary beliefs at the Temptation. The lesson of complete dependence upon God illustrated so forcibly in the first temptation<sup>1</sup> is reaffirmed in the "beatitudes." The "poor" (Matt. v, 3) remind us of the beggars so common in the East. Men are to look to God for the satisfaction of their needs as frankly as the beggars ask of the rich. It is the same thought as that expressed in the more mystical phrase of St. John: "You must be born twice, once physically and once spiritually" (John iii, 3-8)—become as dependent upon God as the little child is upon its mother (cf. Mark x, 15). Indeed the great theme of the Fourth Gospel is the absolute dependence of Jesus upon God. "Of myself I can do nothing," He says again and again: "it is God" (e.g., John iii, 32-35; v, 17-23, 26-30; vi, 38, 57; xii, 49, 50; xiv, 28, 31). The same thought also underlies the only public prayer of Jesus recorded by the synoptists: "I thank Thee, Father . . . that Thou hast hidden these things from the learned, and revealed them to little children." It is because this is His own attitude that He goes on to claim unique knowledge of God, for His realisation of God's Fatherhood is only the other side of His unreserved surrender as God's "beloved Son"; it is because He is "humble-minded" that He claims to give rest to the weary (Matt. xi, 25-30). Even at Gethsemane, when the tragic conflict in His spirit reaches its height and He prays to be spared the last depths of degradation and suffering,

<sup>1</sup> See p. 111 f. *infra*.

He can still add : “ And yet Thy will not mine be done ” (Mark xiv, 36-39).

Jesus had rejected the temptation to rely upon His own genius.<sup>1</sup> So now He says to His disciples : “ Let your light so shine before men that they may . . . glorify your Heavenly Father ” (Matt. v, 16). And as we go on to read the accounts of Jesus’ works of healing, we find it recorded again and again that “ the multitudes when they saw it glorified God ” (e.g. Matt. ix, 8 ; Luke vii, 16, xvii, 15 ; xviii, 43). It is clear that they learnt to lay this emphasis on God from Jesus Himself : “ Go and tell what great things God has done for you ” (Mark v, 19 ; cf. Luke xvii, 18).

(v) *Its Foundation in the Character of God.*

In another “ discourse ” Jesus reveals the ground of the claim for that unreserved trust in God. That trust springs from the character of God ; and from henceforth this occupies a central place in Jesus’ teaching. If God is to reign over the hearts of men they must first be brought to see Him as He is ; and to this end Jesus exhausts all the treasures of His charm and wit, all the resources of His mind. God is the Great Giver. Nature overflows with His lavish goodness ; it is seen in the sunshine and the rain, in the careless freedom of the birds, in the beauty of the wild flowers. Is not all life a free gift, unsought and unearned ? And can the Giver of life not be trusted to give also the food which sustains it ? All anxiety about food and clothing is, therefore, foolish distrust of God’s unfathomably thoughtful care. “ Your Father knows you need all these things ” (Matt. vi, 25-34). Even the highest earthly

<sup>1</sup> Cf. p. 115 f.

love is mean and grudging beside the Divine Fatherhood (Matt. vii, 9-11). Nothing, however trivial, escapes His watchful care (Matt. x, 29-30; Luke xxi, 18). The picture, says Dr. Glover, "is of a strong and tender parent smiling at his children's anxieties."<sup>1</sup> Such, and more, was the picture of God which Jesus constantly held up to His disciples, and which He never ceased to bring home to them in stories of unsurpassed simplicity and beauty: in the parable of the good shepherd who risks everything to find the strayed sheep (Luke xv, 4-7), in the parable of the poor widow's anxiety over her lost coin (Luke xv, 8-10), and again, with supreme tenderness and power, in the story of the father's treatment of his prodigal son (Luke xv, 11-32). The object of these parables was to contrast the real attitude of God towards "sinners" with the attitude which the "righteous" imputed to Him. The central figure of the last parable is, therefore, not the prodigal son, but the father—the picture of God as He really is in His relations with men. Like all Jesus' profoundest thought, it uses the language not of law, but of family relationship and human personality. The younger son is callously selfish: he demands his inheritance while his father is still alive (v. 12); he defies his known wishes (cf., v. 29); he leaves home as soon as he obtains the money. And yet his father displays not only generous affection, but the most sensitive respect for his son's personality. He gives him his patrimony without protest; he leaves him free to go where he will; he makes no attempt to interfere with him so long as he chooses to remain in the far country.

<sup>1</sup> T. R. Glover, *Conflict of Religions in the Early Roman Empire*, pp. 134-5.

“wasting his substance in debauchery.” But when the boy decides of his own free will to return home, while he is still “a great way off” his father “runs” to meet him, embraces him, breaks short his apology, and restores to him his full status as son. There is not a hint of offended dignity or rebuke for past ingratitude and extravagance. The father does not even attempt to conceal his happiness. Virtuous indignation is left to the highly respectable elder brother. This son, too, betrays his selfishness. His conduct has been governed by his own interests (v. 29); he has earned his hire and, like the labourers in the vineyard, he bitterly resents generosity to those who have not earned it. His father’s answer is to entreat him to come and share the festivities. The welcome to the prodigal has drawn attention from the reply to the elder son; but it is no less finely characteristic: “My son, everything that I have is yours.” Justice is not denied, it is transcended.

(vi) *Prayer in the Light of God’s Character.*

That, so far as human language can express it, is the character of God. Prayer is the direct intercourse of the son with this Father. “Ask then, and you will receive” (Matt. vii, 7-11). If opportunity can break down the most grudging and reluctant human unfriendliness (Luke xi, 5 f.; xviii, 1 f.), what effect will it have on that divinely patient Love of God? (Luke xviii, 7). All that God requires is “faith”—the response of man’s whole personality to this Love, and surrender to the divine spirit of forgiveness and generosity (Mark xi, 25); then “all things will be possible to you” (Mark xi, 24; Matt. xvii, 20).

No wonder that at every crisis of His life, the first impulse of Jesus was to retire into solitude in order to be alone with God<sup>1</sup>; or that He should have felt it a sacrilege that men should exploit the intimacy of that friendship (Matt. vi, 5-6, 16-18).

(vii) *The Omnipotence of God.*

Jesus asserts with no less conviction that the God of Love is God—the supreme power and reality in the Universe. It is true that He does not point to this aspect as frequently as to the Fatherhood of God; but that is because it was assumed as an unquestionable truth by all His hearers. When He does lay stress on it, it is in relation to some practical situation by which He makes the belief a living issue and illuminates it afresh. The very extravagance of His pictures brings home as nothing else could the unbelievable power of the God Whom experience had revealed to Him (Mark x, 27; xi, 22-23, cf. p. 43 *supra*).

(viii) *Jesus' Life a Revelation of God.*

But Jesus' words do not comprise the whole of His Gospel. If the supreme purpose of the Messiah was to *be* a revelation of God we must look to His actions as well as His teaching for the picture of that "family likeness" to God of which He spoke. And there is so much that character can convey far more adequately than language. Unless, then, we are to miss much that is essential, we must take into account the whole of His life and personality

<sup>1</sup> At the first danger signs of popularity, Mark i, 35; the choosing of the Twelve, Luke vi, 12; the climax of His popularity, Mark vi, 46; Cæsarea Philippi, Luke ix, 18; the Transfiguration, Luke ix, 29; Gethsemane, Mark xiv, 32-39; the Crucifixion, Mark xv, 34; death, Luke xxiii, 46.

in estimating the full meaning of His claim to be "the Revealer and Representative of God to men."

(ix) *Summary and Conclusion.*

God, then, is the great Lover, the Divine Giver. His purpose in creating man was that He should enter His Kingdom, and to this He invites men as to "a wedding feast." He calls men to love as He loves; and the Divine Love involves a magnificent and lavish generosity, a tenderness that is responsive to every need, a friendliness that can refuse no service, an understanding and affection so profound that "self" is lost in the object of Love. But God will not compel men; Love must be won by Love; and, therefore, in this Divine claim lies the possibility of tragedy—that tragedy of which the Cross is the symbol. Modern psychology is engaged in revealing more precisely what is meant by man's animal and pre-social inheritance; and a strange light it throws on the tremendous conflict through which man's social nature has evolved. Jesus "knew what was in man." "It is out of a man's own self that there come the defiling forces . . . it is they that degrade men" (Mark vii, 20-23). And He saw with penetrating insight that in this "inner world" lay the supreme issue—the conflict between self-importance and self-forgetful Love. In the heart of every man is the "self" of which Jesus speaks; the self to which "he" is the centre of the universe, to which everything else is of interest and value only as it contributes to his survival, his needs, his happiness, his importance, his dignity, and to which all else must, if necessary, be ruthlessly sacrificed. All the false gods whom men have worshipped were made in

this image; gigantic shadows of man's "self," which he has created in order to hallow its claims with the sanctity and appeal of religion; the gods of lust and hatred, vindictiveness and cruelty.

Shakespeare, in one of the sublimest reaches of his imagination, saw a vision of man's life touched with the same beauty of mingled irony and pity:

"And (God) who might the vantage best have took  
Found out the remedy . . .

. . . But man, proud man,  
Dres't in a little brief authority,  
Most ignorant of what he's most assured—  
His glassy essence—like an angry ape  
Plays such phantastic tricks before high Heaven  
As makes the angels weep; who, with our spleens,  
Would all themselves laugh mortal."

*Measure for Measure*, Act II, Sc. ii, 74-75, 117-123.

All God's thought is to pity and heal and bless. It is only proud man who cannot stoop to pardon. In a fury of injured self-importance he struts and gesticulates before the face of pitying Heaven, bent on "insensate revenges," inflicting wounds that he can never heal and bitter hurt beyond his art to assuage.

Against this "self" Jesus comes with the tremendous challenge of Love. Against its gods He sets the God of perfect Love Who never stoops to hatred or revenge, but meets all the vindictiveness, pride and folly of man's selfishness with unwearying Love and pity. And He bids men worship this God alone. Against the claims of self, He sets the divine command: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself"—love him with the same intimacy and understanding, the same recognition of claims to happiness and satisfaction of needs, the same interest and sense of value that a man feels for himself. To create the Kingdom of Love a man

must be prepared to ignore all the claims of "self" and to sacrifice not only "all that he has," but, if need be, his life itself. Here is the fundamental issue of life.

This fact alone can explain the persecution which has been the lot of the great prophets. The opposition to them can always be traced in the last resort to conflict between the claims of a true "righteousness" and the claims of the self-importance which it threatens. Above all, we cannot otherwise understand the bitterness of the opposition against Jesus Himself, the most friendly and sympathetic of all men who ever lived, one who came with a message which was "glad tidings of great joy." But between such Love as Jesus preached and lived, and the spirit of the "self," there could never be any compromise, and Jesus expected none. His challenge, He said, would go down the ages like a sword; His Gospel of Love would raise a conflict with that other claim, so profound, so intimate, so far-reaching that the very foundations of human loyalty would be shaken (Luke xii, 51-53; xiv, 25-27; Mark iii, 32-35; Luke xi, 27-28).



## CHAPTER V

### SOME CONTEMPORARY IMPRESSIONS OF JESUS' PERSONALITY

A MAN'S personality may be appreciated not only through his recorded sayings and actions, but more indirectly by observing the impression he makes on those who come into contact with him. Evidence of this kind is to be found scattered all through the Gospels.<sup>1</sup>

Jesus' rejection of violence has led some men who know of Him only by report into picturing Him as almost effeminately "mild." The dominant impression left on those who actually knew Him was one of commanding power and vitality. The inexhaustible strength (*δύναμις*) that "flowed from Him" (Luke v, 17; vi, 19; viii, 46; cf. Mark v, 1-17) was not confined to the sick, nor the "authority" to his words. What was there to appeal to a proud Roman in the solitary prisoner, without friends or help, who refused to defend or explain Himself? And yet Pilate was disturbed and uneasy, and surrendered Jesus only after emphatic and repeated protests and a public repudiation of the guilt (Mark xv, 2-15; Matt. xxvii, 11-26). And the same spell was cast over men of every sort and condition. John, the austere moralist, the fearless

<sup>1</sup> E.g.: For His popularity, see Part III, Chap. ii; the devotion of women, Luke xi, 27, 28, and pp. 74-5, 78 *supra*, publicans and sinners, pp. 70-3 *supra*.

and independent critic, humbly recognises in Jesus a greater than himself (cf. Mark i, 7 with Matt. xi, 3). The rich young lord "runs" and "kneels" before Jesus, calls Him "Good Master," and appeals to Him with touching confidence to show him the way to "eternal life" (Mark x, 17 f.). A ruler of the synagogue throws himself at Jesus' feet (Mark v, 22). A Roman centurion addresses Him in these terms: "Sir, do not trouble to come to my house, I am not worthy that you should enter my roof. Indeed, I did not think myself worthy to come to you. Only speak the word and my servant will be cured" (Luke vii, 6f.). A member of the Sanhedrin which condemned Jesus is so deeply moved at His condemnation that in the very hour of His enemies' complete triumph he overcomes his fears and scruples, "goes in boldly to Pilate" to ask for Jesus' body, removes it from the Cross and lays it in his own tomb (Mark xv, 43-46). Judas, realising the full meaning of his treachery when it is too late, haunted by the memory of his betrayed Master, in a fit of passionate remorse flings down the price of his betrayal, and goes and hangs himself (Matt. xxvii, 3-5). It was a forsaken and dying man to whom the crucified "bandit" said "Lord, remember me *when you enter your Kingdom*" (Luke xxiii, 42). And the centurion watching Him die exclaimed: "In truth this man *was* a Son of God" (cf. Mark xv, 39 with Matt. xxvii, 40, 43).

And what of the twelve disciples? They were men of widely different types; the fisherman, the peasant, the publican, the political fanatic. Yet every one of these men forsook everything to follow Him. It is true that they believed Him to be a prophet; they were dazzled by His powers of

healing ; and they eventually came to believe that He was the Messiah. But how did they ever come to hold and maintain such a tremendous belief about Him ? How did the conviction survive His death, which so rudely shattered their illusions ? All the circumstances were against mere enthusiastic hero-worship. These men had lived with Jesus all day and every day, and that under the most trying conditions, wandering about the country with no home and as often as not sleeping in the open. They knew that He came of peasant extraction and had been a carpenter at Nazareth. Again and again they saw Him exhausted and disappointed. He had no money and was mostly dependent on others for His food and necessities. He was in bitter opposition to the accredited religious leaders. He was popular, but He resolutely refused to court popularity or to make use of it ; whenever possible He shunned it. He consistently refused to appeal to force, even when His own life was at stake, and rebuked the disciples when they suggested employing it. And He made the most exacting demands. Intimacy could leave no delusions under conditions like these. The influence of such a man in such circumstances must depend ultimately on his own personality. If, at the end of a three years' intimacy with a carpenter of peasant extraction, living under the conditions described, these men had come to the conclusion that He was God's Messiah, with authority to dispense rewards, is not that in itself the most extraordinary tribute ever paid to such a man by his friends ? Nor is that all. This man at the last disappointed all their expectations. Instead of leading them to success and triumph, to their

utter dismay He let Himself be quietly arrested. And then He died, crucified as a common criminal between two thieves. We see them at last, a band of disappointed and frightened men, meeting secretly for fear of their enemies (John xx, 19). What were they to make of that? What they did make of it was to assert, in the face of opposition, persecution, and ridicule, that this crucified peasant, this carpenter with whom they had walked the roads of Galilee for years, whom they had seen day after day hungry, thirsty, tired, hot, dusty, homeless—that this friend of theirs had been exalted to the right hand of God. The personality of Jesus was great enough not only to survive the bitter disillusionment of His apparent failure and the utter ruin of their most cherished hopes, but to triumph over them completely, and through the disciples to change the world.



PART III  
OUTLINES OF JESUS' CAREER



## CHAPTER I

### THE CALL TO MESSIAHSHIP

#### (i) *The Baptism.*

UNTIL He was about thirty years of age Jesus apparently worked at His father's trade as a carpenter, helping His widowed mother to support the family. But other preoccupations were insistently pressing their claim upon Him; and as soon as the age and position of the younger brothers make it possible for Him to give up His work, He leaves the shop at Nazareth to devote Himself to these greater claims. At the height of John's reputation, Jesus, Himself now conscious of a unique revelation from God, comes to listen to the great prophet's call to national repentance, and is baptised among the adherents to that appeal and the proclamation that the Kingdom is about to appear. "And Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee, and was baptised by John in the Jordan. And as He came out of the water He saw the Heavens parting asunder and the Spirit descending on Him like a dove, while a voice<sup>1</sup> spoke to Him from Heaven saying: Thou art my Son, my Beloved, in whom I delight" (Mark i, 10-11). The spiritual revelation described in this pictorial language represents the crowning conviction of the eighteen years' experience which

<sup>1</sup> For the *Bath-qol*, see Oesterley and Box, *op cit*, pp. 215-17, and for the dove as symbol of the Holy Spirit, I Abrahams, *Studies in Pharisaism and the Gospels*, Vol. I, pp. 47-50.



had followed the incident in the Temple (Luke ii, 42-51). That happy boyish intimacy has ripened into an assurance that He, Jesus, had found the true God Whom all the world was seeking and was called to be His Revealer and Interpreter to men. The symbolism is Messianic throughout<sup>1</sup> and may be interpreted as an assurance that the veil that hid God from men (Isa. xxv, 7) was at last removed, and He stood fully revealed to Jesus; that it was in truth the Divine Spirit from Heaven Who inspired Jesus; and that in Jesus Himself the perfect relationship between God and man was uniquely realised. It was the "call" of Jesus to Messiahship; and the "gospel" which He was to deliver on behalf of God was that the attitude of mutual Love and trust expressed in the symbolism of Fatherhood and sonship is God's will for man.

(ii) *The Temptation.*

"And immediately" (says Mark), "the Spirit led Jesus away into the wilderness." Now that the Messianic call had come to Him, He was face to face with the issues of Messiahship: the character of God, the "laws" of the Kingdom, and the method

<sup>1</sup> "The heavens were seen parting." Cf. Ezekiel's call (Ezek. i, 1); see also Gen. xxviii, 12-15; *The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs*: Levi. xviii, 6-7; Judah xxiv, 1-2; Benjamin ix, 2-4. "Thou art my Son," see Ps. ii, 7. "My beloved," see Isa. xlii, 1-4 (Moffatt's trans.), cf. 2 Sam. vii, 14 (spoken of "the Son of David"). The quotations had come to be regarded as Messianic; see Edersheim, *Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*. Vol II, App. ix. The removing of the "veil" from Heaven and the outpouring of the Spirit were acknowledged signs of the "Messianic" age (see e.g., Acts ii, 1-22; Joel ii, 28-29; Isa. xlv, 3 f.; Ezek. xxxix, 29; xxxvi, 25 f. Test. of Judah, xxxiv, 3). For the title "God's Son" applied to the Messiah, cf. also iv Ezra vii, 27-29; xiii, 32; xiv, 9; 1 Enoch cv, 2; Acts ix, 20-22; etc.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. pp. 23-4 *supra*.

of introducing that Kingdom. The first had already been decided and received Divine approval at the baptism. It remained for Jesus to find the solution to the other two problems in the light of that revelation<sup>1</sup> (Mark i, 12-13; Luke iv. 1 f.; Matt. iv, 1 f.).

THE FIRST TEMPTATION.—“And the tempter said: If you *are* the Son of God (see Mark i, 11) command these stones to become bread.” Jesus stands a Messiah, with all the powers of the “Messianic” age at His command, looking out over the world-wide misery of God’s earth. No one ever felt more deeply than He the evil and misery that lay like a blight upon the lives of men. No one knew better what unnumbered hopes, what intensity of longing had gathered round that vision of the new world on which His own people had fixed their eyes and for which they waited with a desire that no language could express; that ancient hope of which poets and seers of all races had dreamed since the beginning of time—Eden, Paradise, the golden world. “Behold, I create a new heaven and a new earth. The past shall be forgotten and shall come to mind no more. But the new creation shall be a joy for ever. . . . Shower down the victory, ye heavens! Rain it from above, ye skies! Let the earth’s womb open for the birth of peace, yea let her too bear victory. . . . The mountains shall break forth before you into singing and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. . . . The wilderness shall blossom like the rose. . . . The sound of weeping shall be no more heard, nor the voice of lamentation. . . . Arise in gladness for the dawn

<sup>1</sup> A rather different and very illuminating interpretation of the Temptation story is put forward by S. Liberty, *Political Relations in the Time of Christ*. pp. 19-77.

has come" (Isa. lxxv, 17; xlv, 8; lv. 12; xxxv, 1; lxxv, 19; lx, 1).

"Ah what a hope! And when afar it glistens  
Stops the heart beating and the lips are dumb."

But was it not the high calling of the Messiah to fulfil this ancient hope? Was He not chosen and predestined by Divine authority to lead His people, a gracious Figure, beloved of God and men, into this "promised land"? "Lo upon the mountains the hastening feet of Him that bringeth good tidings<sup>1</sup> of Joy, that proclaimeth peace, that crieth aloud to Zion, "Your God reigneth". . . . They thirsted not when he led them through the wilderness; He made the water flow for them out of the stone. . . . (So too when they return): they shall not hunger nor thirst at all, for the Compassionate shall lead them" (Isa. lii, 7f.; xlviii, 21; xlix, 10; cf. lviii, 11; xli, 17; xlv, 3). "They shall not hunger" . . . Jesus is hungry; in the intense preoccupation of His thought He had forgotten to take food. The stones in the wilderness of Judca are said to resemble loaves. He finds Himself gazing at them, fascinated; for, as the sight of them makes Him suddenly conscious of His hunger, the thought occurs to Him: Is it not those very Messianic powers now delegated to Him that are in question? How if He were to employ them once and for all for the miraculous relief of all need, for the satisfying of all the cravings of the human heart, the ushering in of the millennium? Indeed, why should He not satisfy Himself by displaying them at once: turn these stones into real bread? Bread created for the satisfaction of need out of the very stones by His marvellous powers—a *miraculous*

<sup>1</sup> In Greek, εὐαγγέλιον—the gospel.

*feeding in the wilderness, and achieved by Himself!* Instantly there has flashed into His mind the story of another feeding in the wilderness, and with it the great author's sublime interpretation:<sup>1</sup> "For forty years in the wilderness God taught you to be humbly dependent upon Him by suffering you to be hungry, and then feeding you with manna . . . in order that He might teach you thereby that man does not live by bread alone, but rather by the whole Word in which God reveals Himself" (Deut. viii, 3). The very object of that previous sojourn and trial in the wilderness had therefore been to teach the Israelites their utter dependence upon God, upon His revelation of Himself and His purpose in human life. In order to drive this lesson home the Israelites were made to realise their dependence on Him for the very supply of their daily food, which comes to most men as the merest matter of course or as the first reward of their own efforts. If they learnt their dependence upon Him even in that, far more would they recognise their dependence upon Him for spiritual life and sustenance. Jesus' hunger, the stones, and the idea of achieving His desires, which craved immediate satisfaction, by the exertion of His own extraordinary powers, all revealed to Him in a flash the inner meaning of that temptation in the light of the experience of ancient Israel. If He yielded to the suggestion to trust to His own genius and employ His splendid endowment for the miraculous creation of that golden world of material prosperity and effortless perfection,<sup>2</sup> He would be exactly

<sup>1</sup> On the quotations cf. 49 *supra* and note.

<sup>2</sup> In the Torah labour is man's curse. See Gen. iii, 17-19. Cf. Isa. li, 3. In the "Messianic" era that curse was to be removed: see Isa. xxv, 6-8,

reversing the whole lesson of the old story. If God has created the world as it is, and not an untroubled paradise, it must be because only thus could His purpose be fulfilled. Why else did He create it? *This* world is the self-revelation (Word) of God to man. And, therefore, if Jesus used the Messianic powers to create what God had refused to create He would be deliberately making Himself, and all mankind, independent of God through the very means by which the Israelites had been taught their dependence on Him. It would indeed be a miraculous feeding in the wilderness, in which the place taken in the old story by the Providence of God would now be usurped by Himself.<sup>1</sup> But that would be false to the whole ideal of Messiahship as Jesus had conceived it. For its essential meaning lay in an absolute self-surrender, an unreserved devotion to God, in order that God might reveal *Himself* in a human personality. Jesus' great gifts must therefore, like everything else, be placed unreservedly at the disposal of God for the fulfilment of God's purposes as these had been revealed by Him to man. So Jesus answered: "It is not by mere bread that man lives, but by God's whole revelation of Himself."<sup>2</sup>

and Deutero-Isaiah *passim*. The tradition of the Messianic Age as a world of perfect material prosperity was continuous; cf. e.g. Hosea xiv, 4-7; Amos ix, 13; Jer. xxxi, 12-14; Joel iii, 19; Mal. iii, 10-12; *The Book of Jubilees*, xxxi, 16; 1 Enoch x, 17-19; xxv, 6; *Sybilline Oracles*, ii, 46-49; iii, 19-22, 41-60, 77-79; v, 81-82, ? Baruch, xxix, 1-8; lxxiii-lxxiv, 1. Cf. also the *Magnificat*: "He hath filled the hungry with good things." Grant goes so far as to make economic distress the main-spring of the "Messianic" hope.

<sup>1</sup> Note the contrast. The temptation is to use the "Messianic" powers for the immediate and complete satisfaction of human need by an arbitrary word; Jesus answers that man lives by *God's* word. In Gen. i, 1, God creates this world by the word of power.

<sup>2</sup> "Word." See Oesterley and Box, R.W.S., pp. 204-210.

And is there not a hint of characteristic humour in the form in which the temptation is expressed? "If a child asks for *bread* will his father give him a *stone*?" (Matt. vii, 9). Did not Jesus Himself say that later, urging that God is "the Father," and men His sons? "Command these *stones* to become *bread*": a paradise remoulded nearer to man's weak and unheroic cravings, and offered to men in place of the "high heroic virtue" of Love—stones for bread indeed!

THE SECOND TEMPTATION.—So Jesus turns to the second conception, that of a warrior-hero and a national empire. Should He win the support of the people by exploiting His marvellous gifts and His compelling personality, place Himself at the head of the nation and found a world-wide Jewish Kingdom in the name of God by His prowess and genius? Such was the popular expectation of the work of the Messiah, perhaps shared by many of their leaders, the Pharisees. A dazzling ambition! This Empire would, of course, have to be founded by political intrigue and force of arms. But these were the methods by which all empires had been founded, and by which Rome in particular had obtained such unprecedented and almost universal success. Had it not been the only successful method in the past? Must it not always remain so? "And the tempter led Jesus up into a high mountain and showed Him all the Kingdoms of the world and their splendour in one comprehensive vision. Then he said: To you will I give all this power and all the glory of these Kingdoms—for to *me* it has been delivered and to whomsoever I will I give it—on condition that you will kneel down and worship me." But the tempter has betrayed himself.

No doubt it was true that all worldly empires were in the gift of force and had always been so in the past. But the condition of founding such an empire was the worship of force. The Kingdom of God must mean a Kingdom which was in accordance with His mind and character ; and the God revealed to Jesus was a God of righteousness and Love. To resort to the means suggested could only result in founding yet another empire of force, not the Kingdom of Love. It would be an admission that force and intrigue are in the last resort the only real means of obtaining men's allegiance, and are, therefore, stronger and greater than Love. But this would be a denial that God is Love. Jesus would, in fact, again be making the very mistake against which the forerunner of the Messiah was said to have warned the Israelites as they were about to enter "the Promised Land." "And it shall be that when the Lord thy God shall have brought thee into the land which He promised to thy fathers . . . then thou shalt beware lest thou forget the Lord Who brought thee out of the house of bondage. *Thou shalt not go after other gods, the gods of the people round about. . . Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God and Him only shalt thou serve*" (Deut vi, 10-14). For Jesus to resort to force or intrigue, in order to introduce God's Kingdom, would in truth be to "follow the gods of the nations round about." But no such forcible subjection of men, no devastating warrior-Messiah, could either reveal Love or win Love; and, therefore, they could never fulfil the purpose of the God of Love. So Jesus answers : "Thou shalt worship the Lord Thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve."

THE THIRD TEMPTATION.—Thus the whole popu-

lar conception of the Messiah and the "Messianic" Kingdom is rejected. There remains the conception of a catastrophic intervention of God, and a Messiah coming from heaven "with great power and glory" to establish the Kingdom. In the first two temptations Jesus had decided that the Messiah must never trust to his own powers in independence of God's self-revelation, nor to the "worldly" methods of intrigue and force and brilliant ambitions. On what was He to rely then for founding the Kingdom? Trust was to be placed in God alone. But such absolute dependence upon God involved entire confidence in His power and goodness—everything had to be staked on that. This confidence finds noble expression in many of the psalms. What, then, should faith answer to such an appeal as this?

Happy is the man who lives . . . under the shelter of the Almighty God, who calls the Lord 'My refuge . . . my God, in whom I trust' . . . He delivers thee . . . under His wings He hides thee . . . Thou hast no need to fear the plague that is abroad in the hours of darkness, nor the sudden death at noontide . . . *He gives His angels charge of thee, to guard thee whithersoever thou go st; to uphold thee in their hands, lest thou strike thy foot against the stones . . .* (Ps. xxi).<sup>1</sup>

Surely, says the tempting voice, before you commit everything to God in such complete surrender and dependence it is your duty to make certain of Him; to make God convince you by a definite test that He can and will uphold those who trust Him to the uttermost. Without some definite and palpable "sign," some striking intervention on God's part, how can faith be proof against doubt? Are you not the Messiah? And is

<sup>1</sup> The whole psalm should be read: it will then be clear why it is used by "the tempter"—it is an assurance of *miraculous protection*.



not the Messiah to descend through the air with the angels of God? The psalmist gives a definite promise that God will uphold His servant; now is the time to put it to the test and see whether it is true or not. "And the devil took Jesus up on to the pinnacle of the Temple and said: If you are God's Son, throw yourself down; for is it not written in Scripture that 'He giveth His angels charge over thee, and in their hands they shall bear thee up lest thou dash thy foot against a stone'?"—*A miraculous intervention on the part of God to win belief and allegiance and prove His power and care!* The thought was surely familiar. Had not the same demand been made before and condemned? Jesus is now conscious of thirst—"They thirsted not when He led them in the wilderness"—a miraculous intervention—Yes, it was when the Israelites thirsted "in the wilderness"; their water supply had failed them, and they had at once lost heart and faith and clamoured for an instant and miraculous proof that God did truly care and was able to save them. If so, let God prove it by creating water to satisfy the people's thirst at once. But the great interpreter had something revealing to say about this also: "You shall not put God to the test as you did at Massah, saying: *Is God among us or not?*" The question reveals the insidious doubt that lurks at the heart of every such demand for a miraculous proof of God's power and Love—the doubt whether God is really with us in the world at all. . . . A decisive and miraculous intervention of God to compel allegiance and vindicate His righteousness—the thought was indeed familiar! "If thou art the Messiah, cast thyself down"—was not the whole Jewish demand for a catastrophic

intervention on the part of God, a coming of the Messiah on the clouds of heaven and with the angelic hosts to vindicate God's righteousness by the terrors of Omnipotence, the sudden abolition of evil by an act of sovereign will—was not this the very same demand, dictated by the same lurking doubt? Did it not arise from the same spirit that the Israelites expressed in their impatient cry for a proof that God cared for them and was able to help them: "Is God among us or not"? For the very belief that such an intervention is necessary implies that God's world is a failure, that He cannot work in it to make it what He desires; and that His purpose can now only be achieved and His justice made manifest by resorting to drastic compulsion. The world was again to be changed utterly without man's co-operation—this time by the omnipotence of God armed with retribution. But once more the test of everything is the character of God. If the true relationship between God and man is best expressed by Fatherhood and sonship, how could a coming with armies of angels, the overawing of all opposition by a display of irresistible strength and majesty, the condemnation and banishment of the greater part of the human race to destruction or torment—how could this reveal God's Fatherhood, or win men's love and trust as God's sons? How could the result satisfy a God Who is Love? What is this but the old unbelief in a new guise—the conviction that Love is powerless, and that the ultimate issue lies with Force? And in reality, though such an exhibition might dazzle men's minds and found a kingdom based on fear or credulity or self-interest, it could no more found the Kingdom built on Love than could the cruder method of worldly

force. So Jesus condemns the whole spirit that looks for such a demonstration from God. If this world is the creation of God's Love, and if human spirits were made for intimacy with Him, if God has not failed, then He must be discoverable here and now, in the world that He has created for this purpose, and in the experience of men—in fact where Jesus Himself had found the true God, and that was not in "signs and marvels." "It is only an evil and disloyal people that seeks a miraculous proof" (Matt. xvi, 4). Love reveals itself and is found in quite other ways. So Jesus answers "Thou shalt not put the Lord thy God to the test."

And is there not again a suggestion of irony in the form in which Jesus presents the temptation? The Messiah is to "descend from above" with the angels of God. Jesus believed that He was called to be Messiah; should He then descend from above? He might go to the pinnacle of the Temple and throw Himself down! Did not the psalmist say that the angels would bear God's servant up in their hands lest he should strike his foot against a stone? So Jesus pictures Himself descending through the air from that pinnacle with guardian angels fluttering round His feet in anxious care lest He should bruise them on the stones in His descent! Is not the mocking humour appropriate to this travesty of God's ways, which dreams that a coming in pomp and terror from Heaven to condemn the majority of mankind to torments and rid the world of evil by an act of violence could adequately reveal the God of Love and effect His purpose?

*(iii) The Chosen Way.*

All the issues of Messiahship are now decided. The prevailing conceptions have been tried and found wanting. The true nature of God is revealed as Love; the Kingdom is the absolute supremacy of Love; and the means of introducing the Kingdom is the spirit and appeal of Love. Or if we wish to summarise the whole revelation of Jesus in more modern language, we might express it in the words: God is Love; Love is the supreme "law" of life; the creation of Love is the supreme activity.

Such was the secret of Jesus' Messianic consciousness. In His unique apprehension that God is Love, and in His complete devotion to the Divine Spirit of Love, He stands as the Revealer and Representative of this, the true God, to men. As Revealer He comes with a fuller and more perfect revelation than the old revelation of the Torah. As God's Representative, sent to establish His Kingdom, He acts as God declares, in the Scriptures, that He Himself will act, and claims on behalf of His office and His message the devotion that God Himself demands. As Messiah He will use His God-given powers only for the relief of man's estate, according to the measure of man's freely given faith, and as evidence of the creative Love of God working through man to achieve his full salvation, "body and mind, soul and spirit." It was as the possessor of this revelation that Jesus called Himself "the Son of Man" and set out to preach God's "good news."

God's "Day" has come; He is waiting to reveal the Kingdom; His Representative has appeared on earth. Only one thing is lacking, man's response

and co-operation. God is Omnipotent and, therefore, all things are possible ; but since His power is at the service of Love, God will have patience to await man's readiness. With this message Jesus opens His ministry (Mark i, 14-15).

## CHAPTER II

### THE MINISTRY

#### (i) *The Announcement of the Kingdom.*

SUCH were the character and the message of the Man who, after John's imprisonment, "came into Galilee preaching the good news of God, and saying : The time is fully come; the Kingdom of God is here; turn and see it and believe the good news" (Mark i, 14-15). The words are significant. John came as a forerunner "to prepare the way." Jesus says : The time of waiting is now at an end (πεπλήρωται ὁ καιρὸς), the hour has struck, the Kingdom is here and waits for you to enter it (cf. Mark xii, 34).

At first His appeal met with considerable success. When His fame as a teacher began to spread, He was not infrequently invited to read the passage of Scripture and address the congregation in the local synagogues ; and He made use of the opportunity to convey His own message (Mark i, 21 ; iii, 1 ; Luke iv, 16). His preaching soon created a considerable stir. From the first men noticed that Jesus spoke with an "authority" unusual among the scholars of the Law ; He had something new to say, and His originality and conviction made a vivid impression (Mark i. 22 ; Luke iv, 32 ; Matt. vii, 29). Luke gives a graphic account of His first visit to Nazareth as " prophet," which may be taken as typical. "He went into the synagogue on the

Sabbath, as usual." His reputation has reached His own village and He is asked to speak. "And He opened the roll at the passage which runs: The Spirit of the Lord is upon me. . . And He closed the roll and sat down. The eyes of every one in the synagogue were rivetted on Him. And He began to speak. And they were all surprised at the charm of His words" (Luke iv, 16-22). It is the same effect that is noted at Capernaum, where He opened His ministry: "They were all astonished and turned to one another and began discussing what He had said. What is this? they exclaimed; a new teaching!" (Mark i, 27). Luke adds that "He used to teach in the synagogues, and was universally praised" (Luke iv, 15).

(ii) *Causes of Jesus' Ultimate Rejection.*

Less than three years later Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem to die. It is impossible to reconstruct the sequence of events between these two crises with any degree of accuracy. The Gospels are reminiscences, not biographies. They were probably pieced together in part from oral tradition, particularly the preaching of the Apostles, and in part from shorter documents based on that teaching.<sup>1</sup> The earlier parts of the narrative are brief and fragmentary,<sup>2</sup> and evidently designed as a prologue to the central event—the "passion" and

<sup>1</sup> On the whole subject of the centres of oral tradition and the use of the latter by the Synoptists, see Canon Streeter, *The Four Gospels*, ch. ix.

<sup>2</sup> E.g. The common source of Matthew and Luke singles out Bethsaida and Chorazin as the most guilty of the Galilean cities (Matt xi, 20-21; Luke x, 13-14). Yet this is the only mention of Chorazin in the Gospels and the only references to 'mighty works' at Bethsaida are Mark viii, 22, and Luke ix, 10-17. Still more surprising is the fact that a saying like "It is more blessed to give than to receive," which was familiar to St. Paul, finds no place in the Gospel records.

death of Jesus which followed the memorable journey to Jerusalem. Even Mark (for example) discloses the vitally important breach with the religious leaders in no more than a few typical incidents, all grouped together ; by the beginning of his third chapter these leaders are already plotting with Herod's party to put Jesus to death (Mark iii, 6). Moreover, the three synoptists rarely agree on the order either of the general course of events or of particular incidents. And yet it is essential to gain an understanding of at least the main elements of the situation that led Jesus to take such an extraordinary step as courting death at the hands of his enemies, and (if possible) of the main stages in the development of this situation. The method followed here will be first to set out the evidence for the two facts which can be ascertained beyond a doubt: the gathering opposition of the religious and political leaders, and the popularity of Jesus with the masses ; and then, assuming that the tradition which records other outstanding events in this earlier part of the career of Jesus is also based on real memories, to see whether the general situation cannot provide an explanation for them. Mark's narrative will be followed as far as possible, without undue insistence on any particular order of events.

(iii) *Analysis of the General Situation.*

In spite of the early popularity of Jesus several things quickly became apparent. One was that His claims to be the bearer of a new message from God, challenging even the thrice-sacred Law of Moses and fulfilling the old Messianic prophecies, very soon provoked a vigorous counter-



challenge. Even at Nazareth, where He had been brought up and worked in the carpenter's shop, the admiration of His townsfolk gave way almost at once to surprise and indignation. As long as He contented Himself with interpreting the prophetic message and announcing the near fulfilment of the prophecies they are more than ready to listen; but when He goes on to identify Himself with the Servant of the Lord and to assert that Isaiah's great prophecy is being fulfilled by His own coming, they are outraged (Mark vi, 3). (The opening message of His ministry had been that the time of waiting was over. He is now even more explicit. Taking a famous description of the "Messianic" age (the Kingdom) He declares that "This very day it is realised; you who listen to me are witnesses of it") (Mark i, 15; Luke iv, 21). And when Jesus protests against the superficiality of condemning Him, not on His merits, but merely because they had known Him and His family all His life, and by way of comment quotes the example of two famous prophets who were sent to strangers and foreigners, they can no longer contain themselves. They rise up against Him in a body, and Jesus barely escapes with His life (Luke iv, 23-30; Mark vi, 1-5).

Ordinary people elsewhere were certainly more ready to listen; Jesus' personality impressed men in the strangest way, and it could not be denied that He worked some extraordinary cures. But not so the local religious leaders.<sup>1</sup> They indignantly resented this new teaching which was not unmixed

<sup>1</sup> On the difficult question of Jesus and the Pharisees the reader is strongly recommended to study Oesterley and Box, *The Religion and Worship of the Synagogue*, pp. 128-139.

with criticism of the sacred "Law" and "traditions," and His claims to fulfil the old prophecies ; for were not these the august prerogative of the Messiah Himself? Moreover, the popularity of Jesus challenged the authority of the Scribes as interpreters of the Divine Scriptures, which they considered to be the highest function available to any teacher or prophet, except that of the Messiah. And Jesus was "a man of the people." What made matters worse, Jesus cared little or nothing for the strict legal observances and ceremonial, those "traditions" on which the scribes and Pharisees prided themselves and which they held to be as binding as the Law itself. He is careless about fasting, for example, and defends His followers from criticism on this account, though even John had been careful to enforce it (Mark ii, 18 f.). And He tells His critics quite frankly that the spirit of His teaching is new, and that it would be worse than useless to try and confine it to the old forms (Mark ii, 21-22). Soon afterwards a still more serious example of this recklessness comes to their notice. His followers break the law of the Sabbath by plucking and eating corn on the day on which no work was allowed.<sup>1</sup> This was a violation not merely of a "tradition," but of one of the most sacred ordinances of the sacred Law. Jesus not merely declares that their need justifies them, supporting the claim with an appeal to the Old Testament, but astonishes His critics with the assertion that "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath ; so that the Son of Man

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the end of the *Book of Jubilees*. The School of Shammai seem to have revived something of the rigours of this work. See Oesterley and Box, *loc. cit.*

is master even of the Sabbath observance" (Mark ii, 23-28). Not only was this a revolutionary attitude towards the Law, but the implication of the last words was even more incredible. For "the Son of Man" was His chosen name for Himself, and the claim ("lord of the Sabbath") was to an authority which they would hardly have conceded to the Messiah. Mark's final example is no less decisive. A man enters the synagogue on the Sabbath with a paralysed arm. By this time Jesus' sympathy with all forms of suffering and His powers as a healer were known to everyone. Would He dare openly to restore the man's arm and break the law of the Sabbath in the Synagogue itself? "They sat watching Him." Jesus cured him; and what is more He again turned the tables on His critics: "If a sheep of yours falls into a well on the Sabbath, would you not pull it out?" They could not deny it. "Then is not a man of more value than a sheep? So it is lawful to do a kind action on the Sabbath." This time it is Jesus Who is indignant. They are silenced but scandalised. Clearly there could be no question of compromise or toleration with such a man. In fact, they begin to think that it is time that this dangerous reformer was put out of the way (Mark iii, 1-6; Matt. xii, 9-14; Luke vi, 6-11). But perhaps the most significant example of all is that which Mark gives first. While Jesus was in the house at Capernaum a man suffering from palsy was let down through the roof. Jesus saw more than physical needs in the man's face: "Son (He says), your sins are forgiven." Among the crowd (as usual now) are some of the local Rabbis, and they are shocked at this new blasphemy. Who does this man imagine Him-

self to be, that He claims to exercise the prerogative of God and God alone? "Only God can forgive sin" (Mark ii, 7). Jesus replies with a direct and frank challenge. "In order that you may know that the Son of Man *has* authority on earth to forgive sins"—he turns to the sick of the palsy and tells him to stand up, take his mattress and walk home. Jesus is accused of usurping God's authority; He answers that He has a right to it, and proves it by showing that the powers of the "Messianic" age are at work in His person. This cannot mean anything else than a claim to be acting as God's Representative on earth (Mark ii, 3-12; cf. Luke vii, 48-50).

Before long the Scribes and Pharisees find a new cause for criticism. Among the crowds who collect round Jesus are now conspicuous certain notorious social outcasts.<sup>1</sup> Far from repelling them, Jesus offers them a frank welcome, and not very long afterwards chooses one of them as a member of His most intimate circle of friends. When challenged by His critics He quietly replies that He is well aware of what He is doing and has every intention of continuing to encourage them (Mark ii, 14-17). This leads to still closer and more critical scrutiny on their part. So bitterly indignant do they at last become that they join with their natural enemies, the Herodians, and discuss the best way of removing Jesus. This fact was one of grave significance. The Herodians were of the Court party, supporters of the usurper Herod and his "hellenistic" culture, and many of them were probably foreigners; they were therefore, in general,

<sup>1</sup> Cf. p. 70 ff. *supra*.

an object of contempt and dislike to the severely patriotic and anti-hellenistic Pharisees. Their uniting now reveals the strength of the opposition that was gathering against Jesus. It meant that the political as well as the religious leaders of Galilee were watching him with disfavour. Herod was clever, but suspicious ; and he was no more in love with popular heroes than was the Roman governor. It was not only that a " king " Messiah challenged his own claims to kingship (which were based solely on force) and that the people had not forgotten the Maccabean house (cf. Matt. ii, 1-18) ; but the indispensable condition of his being tolerated by the Romans was that he should maintain good order. In such matters, therefore, he was quite unscrupulous. Thus it boded ill to Jesus that the Court party was becoming " interested " in this new popular figure. " And Jesus perceiving this (says Matthew) withdrew from thence " (Mark iii, 6 ; Matt. xii, 14-15 ; cf. Mark viii, 15).

By this time information had evidently reached the religious leaders in Jerusalem about the popularity of the teaching and claims of the new " prophet." <sup>1</sup> For we now hear of a deputation sent from there to watch and oppose Jesus. When the cure of a deaf-mute creates a new sensation they see an opportunity to step in. It is quite simple, they say ; Jesus is casting out " evil spirits " with the aid of the chief of these spirits, with whom He is in league to deceive men (Mark iii, 22). Jesus hears this and at once calls the crowd round Him. Would evil, He asks, undo its own work and achieve

<sup>1</sup> The question of Jesus' having visited Jerusalem during His ministry before " the last journey " must be left open here.

good? Is Satan's kingdom then divided by civil war? Incredible! Yes; but what follows from that? "If the hand of God is in this, then indeed the kingdom of God has taken you by surprise." For a man can only enter the stronghold of a powerful chief and despoil him when he has first gained the mastery over him and bound him (Mark iii, 23-27). Once more the claim is unmistakable. Disease and infirmity are the work of evil; and when they come into conflict with the creative activity of God they are robbed of their power. The fact that they were being driven out through Jesus was therefore a proof that in Him "the Kingdom"—the creative power of God—was present and triumphant (cf. Luke x, 17, 18). But more, Jesus takes up the challenge and replies to the critics with one of the severest warnings that He ever uttered: "There is only one sin or blasphemy which cannot be forgiven: blasphemy against the Spirit of God." To be so blinded by hatred that the most obvious work of Love and pity awakens nothing but angry repudiation is to have placed oneself beyond the reach of Love's appeal. And if God is Love, it is rejection of God (Mark iii, 28-30). How came it that the spirit of Pharisaism<sup>1</sup> was so degenerate in these representatives of it? Jesus answers that the cause lay in their belief that it was enough to drive out obvious and gross evil from their lives—evil of the sort that they despised in the tax-gatherers and prostitutes—and erect a series of defences against it in the

<sup>1</sup> For its nobler aspect, see *The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs*, which Jesus had almost certainly read—its tradition was continued by Rabbi Hillel. See also I. Abrahams, *Studies in Pharisaism and the Gospels*. Series I and II.

form of an elaborate system of ceremonial and religious rules and ordinances. Evil must be replaced by positive excellence, for nothing short of creative goodness will or ought to satisfy man. If this is denied to it, human nature will revenge itself by finding satisfaction in more subtle and deadly forms of evil. "And the last state of that man is worse than the first" (Matt. xii, 43-45).

If the leaders who sent this deputation had had any doubts about the attitude and claims of the new prophet, their doubts were now dispelled. It appears that from this time on the religious authorities in Jerusalem kept a watch on Jesus. For Mark records another sharp conflict with a similar deputation (Mark vii, 1-5). They found the disciples eating food without the prescribed ceremonial washing of hands, and at once raised a protest. Jesus replied tersely that this mischievous habit of deifying the "traditions" was perverting all their values (Mark vii, 6-13). Then, calling the crowd round him, He made an impressive statement regarding real and ceremonial defilement: "Listen and understand me. Nothing that goes into a man can defile him; what does defile him is that which comes out of his mouth—from within him" (Mark vii, 14-16). In this one sentence Jesus disposes of the whole Mosaic law of defilement and its subsequent elaboration by the Jewish teachers. With that He left them. But the Pharisees were so deeply offended that even the disciples were alarmed. "Do you realise (asks Peter) that the Pharisees were incensed at what you said?" But the challenge was deliberate: "Yes, every plant not planted by My Heavenly Father must be rooted up"—traditions and rules made by men

and not sanctioned by God's approval must be eradicated from human life, whatever the cost to Jesus (Matt. xv, 12-14).

The Herodians had already joined the Pharisees against Jesus. And now at last we hear that the rivals of the Pharisees within Judaism—the Sadducees—have joined them as well. Jesus' claims can be ignored no longer, and a deputation comes to demand some signal and incontestable proof of them. Jesus replies that their attitude of mind is disloyal to God and that He will not satisfy it (Mark viii, 11-12; with Matt. xvi, 1, 12). Enraged at this refusal they throw off the mask, revealing their true object: "They began to press him passionately, trying to provoke him again and again in the hope that he would say something which would give them a handle against him" (Luke xi, 53-54).

Such is the account in the records of the growing conflict between the Jewish leaders and Jesus, which ended in their uniting against Him.

(iv) *Evidence for Jesus' Popularity.*

Whatever the attitude of the religious leaders, there could be no doubt of the popularity of Jesus among the masses. Evidence of it is scattered all through the gospels. Wherever He goes He is accompanied by crowds. Mark lets fall many graphic phrases describing the scenes which His disciples witnessed. "All the city was gathered at the door" (Mark i, 33); "There was no longer room for the people, even near the door" (Mark ii, 2); "The crowd collected again, so that they could not even snatch a meal" (Mark iii, 20). After the first recorded healing of a leper Jesus found Him-



self "unable any longer openly to enter a city, but had to remain outside in the uninhabited parts" (Mark i, 45). The friends who brought the palsied man "could not get near Jesus on account of the crowd"; they were compelled to climb on to the roof and let him down through a hole into the room (Mark ii, 4). His mother is unable to reach Him and has to stand on the edge of the crowd and have her message passed through (Mark iii, 31-32). The disciples return from their "mission" to find such numbers of people coming and going that "they had no leisure even to eat"; and when Jesus suggests crossing the Lake secretly the people see him, "and they ran together on foot from all the cities, and arrived there before them"—though the place was "in the wilds" (Mark vi, 31-33). These crowds were not composed only of Galileans: "A great multitude from Galilee followed, and from Judea and Jerusalem and Idumea and Perea and the district of Tyre and Sidon," until He is compelled to ask the disciples for a boat "because of the crowd, lest they should crush Him" (Mark iii, 7-9; cf. Mark v, 24; Matt. iv, 24-25; Luke v, 1; vi, 17, etc.). Even the hysterics added to the excitement by taking up the popular cry, though Jesus did His utmost to prevent them (Mark i, 24, 34; iii, 11; v, 7, etc.).

It is equally clear that Jesus found this popularity no less embarrassing and dangerous than the opposition of the religious leaders. Matthew sums up the activities of the whole early period of Jesus' ministry in the words: "He went round all the cities and villages teaching . . . and healing all sorts of disease and sickness" (Matt. ix, 35). One vivid memory of such a sight, as seen perhaps for

the first time by one of the disciples, has found a place in Mark's gospel: As the evening shadows fell there gathered from the hovels and by-ways of the city a strange procession—beggars, cripples, neurotics, diseased—"all the unfortunates" (cf. Mark vi, 55), until the approach was choked with them; "and Jesus cured many of these unfortunates of all kinds of diseases and relieved numbers of them of evil spirits" (Mark i, 32-34). It was this ability to "heal all sorts of diseases and sickness" that, reinforcing the powerful impression made by His personality and the authoritativeness of His teaching, was to prove the source of many of Jesus' chief difficulties and eventually of His most formidable danger. The "common people" regarded it as nothing short of "miraculous." Amid the prevailing state of unrest,<sup>1</sup> the hope of a Deliverer was so strong that even impostors were able to obtain a following. Several such popular "deliverers" are referred to in contemporary literature: Barabbas was probably one; two others are mentioned by Gamaliel in Acts (Acts v, 36-37).<sup>2</sup> In such an atmosphere Jesus' reputation as a prophet and worker of miracles at once caught the popular imagination and spread with surprising rapidity (e.g., Mark i, 28, 33, 45; iii, 7, 8); and it is not difficult to understand how such a reputation, enhanced possibly by rumours of a claim on the part of Jesus Himself to be the fulfiller of the ancient hopes and by suggestions and hints from His disciples, might involve Jesus in grave danger of being mistaken not merely for a popular hero but eventually for the popular Messiah himself.

<sup>1</sup> p. 19, *supra*.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Josephus, *Wars*, Bk. II, c. viii, 1. *Ant.* xviii, 1-6.

On the other hand, Jesus taught that the God of Whom He claimed to be the Representative was perfect Love and open to every appeal of human need. And therefore neither His deep and genuine natural sympathy nor His reasoned convictions would allow Jesus to refuse response to the appeals that met Him every day from such sufferers. He was thus placed in a serious dilemma. Very soon after the opening of His career Mark records that "He got up very early one morning, long before dawn, and went right away into a lonely spot and there prayed." This was a sure sign of his consciousness that a crisis was at hand.<sup>1</sup> His disciples, who were delighted at the popularity of their Master, followed Him and begged Him to return. But Jesus replied: "Let us go elsewhere into the neighbouring towns that I may preach there also, for *this* was the object of my coming forward." And then He "went about all Galilee preaching in the synagogues . . ." (Mark i, 35-39; Matt. iv, 23-25; Luke iv, 42-43). That is to say, as soon as popular excitement is roused in one locality, He goes elsewhere and lays stress on His teaching. Meanwhile He does His utmost to escape from this disquieting popularity. When a leper came to be cured, Jesus healed him and then "insisted on his going away at once, laying the strictest injunctions on him not to say a word about it to anyone" (Mark i, 43-44). In spite of these precautions, however, He was unable to prevent the report from spreading. The consequence was that He was compelled to remain in the open country. But even this was of little help in stemming the tide of

<sup>1</sup> Cf. p. 98 *supra*.

popular enthusiasm, for "they came to Him there from every quarter" (Mark i, 45). When He does return to Capernaum and a crowd once more collects, He immediately begins to "preach His message" to them (Mark ii, 1-2). Luke says that He was now constantly withdrawing into solitude in order to pray (Luke v, 16). None of these efforts are of any avail; for the people everywhere "hear what He has done" and the old hope quickens within them (Mark iii, 7-10, 20-21). But throughout this part of His career Jesus never ceases His efforts to avoid excitement. He refuses to let the restored maniac accompany Him back to Galilee (Mark v, 18-19). He allows only three disciples and the father and mother of Jairus' daughter to enter the sick-room; and before leaving He warns them all not to mention the curing of the girl to anyone (Mark v, 35-43). As the situation becomes more strained He redoubles His precautions. When a deaf-mute is brought to Him "He took the man aside, away from the crowd, into a private place"; and after curing him "enjoined them strictly" not to say anything to anyone (Mark vii, 32-36). Again at Bethsaida He took a blind man who came to be cured "and led him by the hand right out the village," restored his sight and then "sent him away, saying: Do not so much as set foot again in the village" (Mark viii, 22-26). In another village He refuses to take any notice of two blind men who follow Him, crying "Have mercy on us, Son of David," until He is safely in the house; then He lets them in quietly, cures them, and sends them away with "a stern warning to be silent" (Matt. ix, 27-34). On one occasion He even resists the pleading of a mother for her daughter with

apparent harshness until her wit and passionate devotion to her child make it impossible for Him to resist her appeals any longer: He heals the child, but leaves the place immediately afterwards (Mark vii, 24-30 ; Matt. xv, 21-28).

And yet in spite of all these precautions Jesus never succeeded either in dispelling the popular illusions or in allaying the excitement. On the contrary, it grew greater and greater until at last it bore its inevitable fruit. John the Baptist had caused less excitement than Jesus ; but Herod had beheaded him in prison, mainly through fear of the effects of his popularity on the prevailing unrest (Mark vi, 17-29 ; Matt. xiv, 12). When Jesus is travelling alone after the despatch of the Twelve on a preaching tour He hears the ominous news that His own popularity is causing Herod the same uneasiness (Mark vi, 14-16). He knew that a popular hero would, like John, find short shrift if he fell into Herod's hands. And so when the disciples returned Jesus at once "took them away with Him and went secretly into an uninhabited place near Bethsaida" (Luke ix, 10 ; Matt. xiv, 12-13). It was essential that He should be alone with them to have leisure to consider the situation. Unhappily He failed. He arrived to see a large crowd waiting for him (Mark vi, 33). As evening draws on they find themselves out in the wilds with nothing to eat and no village near. As He cannot allow them to go away faint with hunger He finds some unusual means of feeding them. Mark's account of what followed is vague but curiously suggestive (Mark vi, 45-46). "Immediately" Jesus "compelled" the disciples to get into a boat and "go on ahead" leaving Him to deal with the

crowds. Why should He wait to disperse the crowds and be unwilling to leave until they had gone? Why should He insist so strongly on the disciples leaving first? And as soon as the crowds have left He goes away by Himself to pray. Evidently something serious had happened. The Fourth Gospel provides a clue (John vi). This account says that the people became so excited that "they attempted to seize Jesus forcibly and make Him their 'king'" (v. 15). Jesus thereupon retreated alone into the hills and remained there until after nightfall, only rejoining the disciples under cover of the dark (v. 17-19); they then crossed the lake for an unknown destination; the crowd, however, undeterred by His refusal, continued to search until they found where He had gone (v. 24); this led Jesus to protest strongly against their setting so much store on the mere provision of food in the wilderness and to insist on the spiritual lesson that He wished to convey. At last they are disillusioned and leave Him: "it was after this that many of His disciples left him, refusing to follow Him any longer" (v. 66). This shows what they had hoped from Him (cf. v. 15), and why opinions differed about Him so much (cf. Mark viii, 28)—His claims and behaviour baffled them. Further light is thrown on this incident when we compare the accounts of the so-called "inspired" insurrectionary leaders; for they are all represented as having first issued from the hilly tracts of wilderness at the head of their followers. It would seem then that what occurred so excited the crowds that they attempted to make Jesus do the same. And this after John's death at the hands of Herod followed by a warning that

Herod was now transferring his attention to Jesus with the support of the religious leaders! The significance of all these facts is plain. A crisis could no longer be avoided.

*(v) Steps taken by Jesus to Meet the Situation.*

Such was the general situation with which Jesus was confronted. But it can hardly be supposed that Jesus, of all men, would have allowed matters to drift without making any attempt to control the situation and avoid failure. The whole purpose of His life was at stake. For the object to which He had unreservedly devoted Himself was to give His revelation to the world through His own people: to lead men to see God and "the Kingdom" as He saw them and surrender themselves as He had done to the Spirit of God and the establishing of that Kingdom. Experience soon showed that the religious leaders who faced Him were too unsympathetic and hostile for there to be any hope of winning them. Their antagonism became relentless as soon as they took the measure of the new "prophet." The only course that remained was to win the people, or, if that was impossible, to find at least some among them who would accept His message and be ready to follow Him. But what if the people either could not or would not understand? And as a fact it soon became apparent that the masses—though for quite different reasons from those of their leaders—were likely to remain obstinately impervious to all that Jesus valued most and was most concerned to pass on to them. Unless He was to throw up His hands in despair, it was surely inevitable that He should employ all the resources at His disposal in endeavouring to

win them, and, failing that, to find some other way of securing that His message should not be lost. What steps, then, did He take? It is at least worth while considering whether the general situation as described above cannot suggest an explanation of certain important events in the Gospel records which will throw this further light on Jesus' mind.

The source of Jesus' teaching common to Matthew and Luke<sup>1</sup> has preserved a tradition that Jesus delivered what is known as a "Sermon on the Mount"; Jesus spent His whole public ministry preaching; the "sermon," therefore, appears to have been a series of discourses which were for some reason remembered as something distinct from His ordinary preaching. We have seen that as soon as Jesus' popularity became embarrassing He met the situation by laying stress on His teaching. What could be more natural than that when He found the most important thing of all—His message about God—being consistently pushed into the background and smothered in the excitement over His miracles, He should have attempted to put His teaching in its right place by delivering a series of "discourses," discussing His Gospel in all its necessary bearings and setting right misunderstandings that had arisen? The Sermon as it has come down to us is undoubtedly a compilation; for Matthew includes a whole series of passages which Luke places in an altogether different context.\* Eliminating these and following

<sup>1</sup> Known as Q.

\* Luke places Matt. v, 18, 25-26; vi, 9-13, 19-34; vii, 7-11, 13-14, in a different context, and altogether omits Matt. v, 19-24, 27-37; vi, 1-8, 16-19. The only important discrepancy in the common material is in the language of the beatitudes. Probably Luke's version gives the more



Matthew's scheme, the "Sermon" runs as follows: The Jews of Jesus' time were much preoccupied with the Kingdom and the "elect" who were to inherit it. It was therefore a subject in which they would be immediately interested. Jesus therefore begins by indicating what sort of men would "inherit the Kingdom" which He announced. (Matt. v, 1-12; Luke vi, 20-26). But the heirs of God's Kingdom are "the children of God" (Matt. vi, 9). Jesus therefore goes on to develop more fully His conception of the Divine Spirit of Love in which they must live in order to become members of the Kingdom (Matt. v, 43-48; Luke vi, 27-38). John the Baptist had brought the claims of righteousness home to his rough audiences by definite and practical examples (Luke iii, 10-14). Jesus offers His own illustrations, luminous with humour and directness (Matt. v, 38-42). From the "common people" Jesus turns to the religious leaders, and considers the bearing of His message on the two main contemporary sources of religious guidance and inspiration: the Law and the rabbinic "tradition." The new "law" is not the negation of the old, but its fulfilment and completion (Matt. v, 17-38). It was different with the Pharisaism of His day; it was encouraging that most subtle and deadly form of spiritual weakness, self-importance. Jesus illustrates this by considering their attitude towards almsgiving, fasting and prayer, and contrasts it with the spirit of self-forgetful Love (Matt. vi, 1-18). In conclusion He insists on the practical nature of religion; action

literally accurate form of the beatitudes, Matthew the true interpretation of them. On the general subject see Headlam, *Life and Teaching of Jesus Christ*, pp. 209 ff.

and illumination go hand in hand (Matt. vii, 16-23 ; Luke vi, 43-46). The principles thus elucidated are the fundamental facts of reality on which all true thought and action must be based, and to which man must adapt himself as a spiritual being. The man who constructs his life on other principles is building on sand (Matt. vii, 24-27 ; Luke vii, 47-49). The "Sermon" thus follows exactly the line which we should have expected Jesus to take under the circumstances. If this supposition is correct, then Jesus' first answer to the situation outlined above was to insist upon the primary importance of His teaching, and to explain it in its relation to current teaching. At the same time He endeavoured to avoid publicity when performing cures.

The effort to make the people understand His Gospel was clearly unsuccessful. Jesus does, however, make one more attempt to reach the masses. For Mark records the adoption of a new form of teaching—the parable. "Jesus once more began preaching on the seashore. . . . He was teaching in parables. . . . He spoke His message to them in many such parables, adapted to their capacity to understand. He was not addressing them (now) except in the form of parables" (Mark iv, 1, 2, 33). He had failed to make them understand when He spoke to them in direct language. He therefore decides to speak even more simply, using picturesque stories taken from the most familiar surroundings of their everyday life which they could not fail to appreciate, and again referring to the conception filling all their thoughts, the Kingdom of God. (Was He not an artist in such pictures?) But it was an ominous fact that even the disciples failed

to comprehend either the object of the new form of teaching or the point that Jesus intended to convey in the first parables. At first sight this seems surprising; but it has to be remembered that the subject of these parables is the Kingdom of God, and it was precisely on the conception of God and His Kingdom that Jesus differed from the Jews of His time; His new conception of them *was* His Gospel. The parable of the sower, Jesus explains, was meant to convey the "mystery" or "secret" of the Kingdom which had already been explained to the disciples, but which those outside their circle did not know (Mark iv, 11). He then interprets it as referring to the sowing of "the message"; that message is the seed; the soils illustrate the ways in which the different kinds of men had responded to it (Mark iv, 14-20). The "secret" must therefore be that the revelation of God is like a seed; if it is to bring forth fruit it must be planted deep in men's hearts and there allowed to develop by a process of natural growth under natural conditions, just as does the seed when it is sown in the ground and by a series of natural processes become ripe corn. Further, just as the growth of the seed is conditioned by the soil into which it falls, so the growth of the "Gospel" is conditioned by the state of the heart into which it falls. This was indeed a secret that needed learning by men who believed in the establishment of the Kingdom by political force, or by a sudden catastrophic intervention of God. In order that there may be no mistake about the meaning of the parable, Jesus adds: "The Kingdom is like a seed that a man plants in the soil. He goes about his business and takes his rest; and all the while the mysterious

growth goes on. The earth by its own natural processes produces the young shoot, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear. *Then*, when the corn is ripe, comes the time of harvesting" (Mark iv, 26-29; cf. Mark iv, 30-32; Luke xiii, 20-21). The parable of the wheat and the tares follows. The evil and mischievous ideas that were continually springing up and mingling with the truth of His own teaching in the minds of His hearers (for example, mistaken ideas of Messiahship?) proved that the growth of evil is no less regular and mysterious, obeying exactly the same processes. Indeed, once they have obtained root it seems impossible to eradicate the "weeds" without destroying the "wheat" as well. For the present they would have to be left to grow together (it was apparently too late to separate them now) (Matt. xiii, 29). But the sifting would come nevertheless (Matt. xiii, 30, 47-48). Other parables relate to another point on which Jesus was always insisting: that the Kingdom was "there"—a present reality if men would but look and see it (Matt. xiii, 44; cf. v. 16-17 and pp. 123-125 *supra*); it only awaited their discovery (Matt. xiii, 45-46).

Meanwhile in face of the growing opposition of the leaders and the increasing popular excitement Jesus had already decided on a new step. He found that it was almost impossible for Him to make any permanent impression with His original and unorthodox teaching on the fluctuating crowds who came and went, jostling one another, greedily picking up rumours, exciting themselves over His works of healing, and hearing only snatches of His message. He needed a smaller and more permanent audience, to whom He could explain His Gospel

more fully and who would later pass it on to others (Mark iii, 14-15 ; cf. iv, 11). He therefore determines to select from the general body of His followers a group of intimate friends who will be willing to live with Him in permanent companionship, and to devote His main endeavours to making them understand His new gospel (Mark iv, 10, 11, 34 ; vii, 17 ; viii, 30-31 ; ix, 9-13, 30-31 ; x, 10, 32 ; xiii, 3-4). How these friendships originated is indicated in the Fourth Gospel. Two of the Baptist's disciples overhear Him speaking of Jesus in terms of great admiration. Full of curiosity, they follow Jesus and are invited to spend the day with Him. As a result Andrew introduces his brother Simon (John i, 35-42 ; cf. Matt. xiv, 12). Out of such casual acquaintance there springs up a friendship between them and Jesus. He falls into the habit of asking one or other of them to accompany Him on His tours (John i, 43). Mark describes one such occasion (Mark i, 16-20) and Luke another (Luke v, 1-11). Later on Jesus makes friends with a tax-gatherer and gives him a similar invitation (Mark ii, 14-15). As their intimacy ripens they find themselves spending more and more of their time in His company. They begin to learn something of His free habits of thought (Mark ii, 16-28). These are the men whom Jesus now selects as the nucleus of the new "Society." "One day Jesus went up into the hill country to pray ; He spent the whole night there praying to God. In the morning He sent for His disciples and called apart those whom He wished to see. Of these He selected twelve that they might remain with Him and that He might afterwards send them out to preach" (Mark iii, 13-14, with Luke vi, 12-16 ; cf. Luke viii, 2).

The last words indicate a further object that Jesus had in mind. The very numbers of the crowds who flocked round Him oppressed Him with the sense of unlimited opportunities and at the same time of the impossibility of one man meeting such endless calls on His time and sympathy. It distressed Him to see so much need and ignorance go unrelieved, when it might be relieved if only other men would realise the truth of God's saving Love and that the powers of His Kingdom were "present to heal" (cf. John iv, 34-38). He therefore appeals to the Twelve: "The harvest is indeed a rich one, but there are so few labourers. Pray the Lord of the harvest to send more workers" (Matt. ix, 35-38). Finally He asks them to go on a mission of help themselves. "He sent them out two by two . . . with these instructions: Publicly proclaim that the Kingdom of Heaven is at men's doors. . . . Freely have you received, now give as generously"<sup>1</sup> (Matt. x, 1-8). The instructions that follow are of profound interest for another reason: they reveal once more Jesus' awareness of how precarious the situation was becoming. Urgency and haste breathe in every sentence (Mark vi, 7-13; Matt. ix, 35-x, 15; Luke ix, 1-5; x, 1-25). At any moment the opportunity might vanish; the disciples are therefore not to go into Samaria or the region of Tyre and Sidon, but to concentrate on "the lost sheep of Israel" with whom Jesus had been concerned most intimately

<sup>1</sup> Luke states that the "mission of the Twelve" was followed by the "mission of the Seventy," the latter at least occurring during or just before the "last journey." It is, however, impossible to distinguish the instructions given on either occasion (if there were two), and I have not attempted to do so.

and who would therefore be most likely to understand and respond immediately to the appeal (Matt. x, 5-6). For the same reason they are not to take food or money or a change of clothes, only sandals and a stick (Mark vi, 8-10); for lodging and food they must depend entirely on well-wishers, taking advantage of the enthusiasm prevailing at the moment (Luke x, 7-9). If they are refused a hearing they are not to waste time by staying to argue but are to go on at once to the next village (Mark vi, 11). Above all, wherever they go they are to insist that the Kingdom has come and is waiting for them to enter it and to proclaim the "good news of God" (Matt. x, 7; Luke x, 9-11; Mark vi, 12; Luke ix, 6). The whole passage conveys a sense of impending crisis; evidently Jesus expects that at any moment something serious may happen. Matthew even suggests that He anticipated the possibility of His arrest and death before their return (Matt. x, 23). The tension of a crisis may again be felt in Jesus' words of greeting when they return and tell Him that His powers of healing are being manifested in them also. His mind at once leaps forward exultingly to the assured realisation of all that He had longed and worked for; He sees "Satan falling like a lightning flash from Heaven"—a well-known symbol of the triumph of the Messiah over the forces of evil and the establishment of the reign of God (cf. Rev. xii, 7-9; xx, 1-3). This power of God at work in human life is, Jesus assures His followers, the sign that the Kingdom which seers and princes had longed to see in vain was now present and revealing itself before their

eyes, present above all in and through Jesus Himself (Luke x, 17-24 ; cf. xi, 20).<sup>1</sup>

As the Gospel narrative continues we become aware of the growing isolation of Jesus. All His efforts to win the understanding and support of the people to His real aims failed ; the opposition of the religious leaders became almost daily intensified ; Herod was watching and perhaps already threatening Him. Worse than this even His friends were failing Him. John the Baptist, while still alive in prison, had received reports about the miracles and popularity of Jesus. He also hears something of the new teaching ; and what he hears surprises and disappoints him. Where are the axe, the winnowing fan, the fire consuming the chaff, the God of Vengeance ? What is this that he is told of the forbidding of criticism and denunciation ? At length he sends two of his followers to ascertain the truth from Jesus Himself : " John says : Are you the Coming One, or are we to look for someone else ? " There was a famous " Messianic " prophecy of another temper than that which appealed to John and which Jesus had already quoted at Nazareth ; He now points to the fulfilment of that prophecy in support of His claim to be " the Coming One." He lets John's messengers see His works of healing (works of pity) and hear His gospel (the gospel of Love) and then replies : " Go back and tell John what you have seen and heard ; and add this : Blessed is the man who does not find any-

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the *midrash* :

Blessed is the hour when the Messiah shall come,  
Blessed is the womb out of which he shall come,  
Blessed are his contemporaries who are eyewitnesses,  
Blessed is the eye that is honoured with the sight of him.

Quoted Oesterley and Box, *op. cit.*, p. 90. Cf. Luke iv, 21 ; xi, 27-28.



thing to offend him in Me." The challenge revealed the gulf that separated the whole outlook and teaching of John from that of Jesus. "The era of the Law and the prophets continued to the time of John; since he came the Kingdom has been suffering violence—the apostles of force have been attempting to capture it and make it their own." John, the peer of the old prophets, had failed to see the new light—the revelation of the law of Love that had superseded the law of Force. So John had lost faith in Jesus. Jesus had a profound admiration for him (Matt. xi, 11).<sup>1</sup> John's blunt question must therefore have left a painful impression on Jesus' mind. Finally the friends of Jesus' family and His family itself had become estranged from Him. The separation becomes complete when these friends lose patience and declare that He has lost His sanity and should be put under control before further mischief was done (Mark iii, 20-21). Their attempt to remove Him by force failing, they approach His family. His mother becomes alarmed for Jesus' safety, and at once calls her other sons and sets out to persuade Him to return home and abandon His self-chosen career. Jesus listens, and then, with the quick gesture that they know so well, He points to His disciples and says: "Here is my real family; for my mother and brothers and sisters are those who do the will of God." Isolated on every side, Jesus' only hope did in truth now lie in that little band of friends and companions. It was therefore more essential than ever that the disciples should understand His message. And yet their inability to comprehend even the simplest

<sup>1</sup> Note the tactful friendliness of Jesus in John iv, 1-3.

expression of His thought was only too painfully evident.

This will become more apparent after Cæsarea Philippi. For the moment it will be sufficient to recall their complete failure to understand His most obvious parables ("Can you not understand *this* parable? Then how will you understand any parable?"—Mark iv, 13); their failure to see the irony of His quotation from Isaiah<sup>1</sup> ("Those who have ears to hear with must use them and listen. . . . Be careful how you do listen . . . for if a man is not even master of what he has he will lose that as well"—Mark iv, 21-25); and their prosaically literal interpretation of Jesus' reference to the leaven of the Pharisees and Herod (Mark viii, 13-21). Their obtuseness baffled Jesus: "Do you not understand even yet . . . are you *still* unable to comprehend?" (Mark viii, 17, 18, 21). But if they were His last hope it is evident that Jesus would have to make a special effort to enlighten them. It was probably for these reasons, then, that Jesus decided to give up His works of healing and even His public preaching for some time in order to devote Himself entirely to the Twelve. For Mark records that he left Galilee and went off the beaten track northwards into the region of Tyre and Sidon, taking only the Twelve with Him (Mark vii, 24), and returning "by way of Decapolis"—that is, not through Galilee but through the region of the independent Greek cities on the other side of the river (Mark vii, 31). Finally, after another period of public ministry, Jesus once more takes them away "by themselves," this time into the region of Cæsarea Philippi. There was little

<sup>1</sup> Cf. p. 50, *supra*.

likelihood of His being disturbed there, for the region was out of the jurisdiction of Herod, and also outside the limits of Judea (the centre of the religious leaders) and Galilee (where the crowds were so embarrassing). He was evidently making a supreme effort to make the disciples understand His message.

Before long it also becomes clear that another purpose has been shaping itself in His mind. One day when they are near Cæsarea Philippi the disciples miss Jesus; after some time they find Him praying alone; when He has finished He asks them: "Who are people saying that I am?" They tell Him, "Some say you are John the Baptist, others Elijah, others one of the great prophets" (cf. Mark vi, 15). Then Jesus asks the momentous question: "Who do you think that I am?" Peter answers impulsively, "You are the Messiah"<sup>1</sup> (Mark viii, 27-29). Jesus' reply shows how deeply He is moved: Yes (He says), and that is a true revelation from God, the truth indeed which unlocks the entrance to the Kingdom of Heaven, the foundation on which the new Society will be established (Matt. xvi, 17-19).<sup>2</sup> But He immediately adds a warning that they are to tell no one else; the time for the public claim would come, but for the present He does not wish the claim to be mentioned outside His chosen circle of friends. His next words come to them with a shock of surprise. They have admitted His Messiahship, and He tells them that they are right; and then

<sup>1</sup> "The Christ"—*Christos* is the Greek translation of "the Messiah." Apparently Peter used the popular term, and Jesus now accepts it with the proviso that the disciples are not to use it of him to anyone else.

<sup>2</sup> Found in Matthew only.

in the same breath He goes on to say: And now I am going straight to suffering and death! "And Jesus began telling the disciples that He must go up to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of the Elders and High Priests and Scribes and be killed and then rise again" (Mark viii, 31). "He said this quite plainly," adds Mark (Mark viii, 32). The disciples are completely at a loss to understand His meaning. For a moment they stand bewildered. Then Peter breaks out indignantly: "God forbid that such a thing should happen to you, Master; that is the last thing that will befall *you*" (Matt. xvi, 22). It was indeed the last thing that Peter meant in calling Him Messiah. But Jesus turns round and, with His eyes fixed on the disciples, "Out of my sight, tempter," he says to Peter, "you see things from the human point of view, not with God's eyes" (Mark viii, 33; Matt. xvi, 23). "Out of my sight, tempter": Peter's words were an echo of the old temptation (Matt. iv, 8-10). Its voice had never ceased to whisper; for it was the way of compromise and popularity; the way along which the disciples would have led Him; and the other path was not an easy one: "Jesus said to His disciples, If any one would follow me now he must ignore self and take up his cross and follow in my steps" (Matt. xvi, 24). He intends to make his meaning unmistakable. He must have witnessed such sights Himself<sup>1</sup> and the picture had burnt itself on His quick and sensitive mind—a squad of Roman

<sup>1</sup> It is quite possible that the rebellion of Judas of Galilee, during which several thousand Jews were crucified, occurred in the year that Jesus travelled to Jerusalem with his parents. Sephore, which is visible from the hills round Nazareth, was burnt by Varus during the campaign.

soldiers marching down the road, and in their centre a man with set face and eyes of despair, carrying a cross—a condemned criminal on his way to execution. A Roman execution was a cruel and lingering death. And now Jesus turns to the disciples who were expecting to be led in triumph to the establishment of a great kingdom, and themselves to occupy the highest posts, and says to them: You have seen that sight; if anyone wishes to be my disciple now he will have to put his cross on his shoulder and follow Me to the place of execution. "What advantage would it be to a man if he *were* to win the whole world (see again Matt. iv, 8-9) at the cost of losing his own soul? . . . But the Son of Man is about to come 'in the glory of the Father and with His angels.' Yes, I assure you in very truth that you standing here are going to witness 'the coming of the Son of Man' before you die" (Matt. xvi, 26-28). So soon was the famous prophecy to be accomplished—in the passing of a condemned criminal to his death! There can be no mistaking Jesus' meaning. In order to compel them to see the revelation of God that He came to make known to them, in order to open their eyes to the true nature of Messiahship, He had deliberately made up His mind to go and meet death at the hands of His enemies. All other ways had been blocked by the impenetrable folly of men. "I came to set the world on fire. Would that it had been done. But before that can be I must needs undergo a baptism;<sup>1</sup> until that is accomplished I am helpless" (Luke xii, 49-50—συνέχομαι—hemmed in).

<sup>1</sup> Baptism is a public rite signifying the end of the old life and the beginning of a new.

## CHAPTER III

### THE PASSION

#### (i) *Why Jesus went up to Jerusalem to Die.*

THE explanation for this surprising resolve is to be found in the impossible situation into which, as we have seen, Jesus had been driven by the opposition of the religious world, the political dangers arising out of His popularity, and the utter inability of the disciples to grasp the new revelation. There were three main classes with whom Jesus was concerned: the masses, the religious leaders, and the political leaders. The revelation on which Jesus based His claim to Messiahship was that the old conception of Force and Retribution as ultimate realities of life and characteristic activities of God, was false; God is perfect Love and the Kingdom is the supremacy of His Spirit. The Messiah was the Revealer of this truth and the Representative of this God.

But the masses were still dazzled by their old hope of a national Warrior-Messiah. The personality of Jesus, the healing power of Divine Love manifested in His "miracles," His announcement that He was bringing in the Kingdom: these had indeed roused in the people a ferment of wonder and expectation. But, obsessed by their dreams, they read into Jesus' claims and activities their own conception of the Kingdom and Messiahship.

His new revelation passed over their heads without their seeing a glimpse of the Kingdom that could have no dealings with intrigue and armed violence. And so the very influences which excited them to see in Jesus the fulfilment of their hopes instead of enlightening them only inflamed their fanaticism still more. The consequence was that they were fast driving Jesus into the fatal position of a popular hero who was openly expected to lead them to victorious insurrection and independence.

On the other hand, most of the educated classes, though they had rejected the popular ideas, were no less preoccupied with their own thoughts of God and His Kingdom. They were obsessed by the majestic and avenging Jehovah of the prophets and the terrible Day of the Lord portrayed by them in language of sombre magnificence.<sup>1</sup> Some looked for a Son of Man coming in clouds of Heaven, some for a Messiah who should slay their enemies with the breath of his mouth and change the world by the word of power. To all of them alike the claim of Jesus—this village carpenter from despised Nazareth in half-Gentile Galilee—to be God's Representative; His appeal to a simple life of Love and pity and healing as the true revelation of the Spirit of God; His amazing assertion that God is Love and trusts solely to Love, and not to compulsion or vengeance for securing His reign upon earth—all this seemed to them, if not madness, then sheer blasphemy.

There were other grounds, however, for the rejection of Jesus by the Jewish leaders. It is hardly possible to exaggerate the reverence with which the Old Testament, above all the Law of

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Zeph. i, 7-18.

Moses, was regarded by the strict Jew. "Owing to Ezra's efforts and those of his successors, it became an accepted dogma in Judaism that the Law was the complete and final word of God and so valid for all eternity."<sup>1</sup> Even the greatest of the seers and mystics to whom the development of religious thought after the closing of the canon was largely due "never betray a single sign of disloyalty in their utterances with regard to it. In every work emanating from their school, the supremacy and everlastingness of the Law are maintained."<sup>2</sup> All that a new writer or prophet, however great, could do was to accept and carry on this tradition: "When once this idea of an inspired Law—adequate, infallible and valid for all time—had become an accepted dogma of Judaism . . . there was no longer any room for independent representatives of God appearing before men. . . . God had, according to the official teachers of the Church, spoken His last and final word through the Law, and when the hope is expressed that in the coming age a prophet will arise, he was only conceived as one whose task was to decide questions of spiritual and priestly succession, or legal interpretation according to the Law."<sup>3</sup> And of the whole Old Testament the Law itself was the essential core: "The Rabbinic scholars taught that whereas the prophets and Hagiographa<sup>4</sup> will in future cease to be, for there is nothing in them which is not suggested in the Law, 'the Law itself would endure for ever,' and that 'any prophet who

<sup>1</sup> Charles, *Between the Old and New Testaments*, p. 161.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 165.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 40.

<sup>4</sup> Books included in the Canon later than the Law and the Prophets (Ruth, Proverbs, Esther, etc.).



attempted to annul one of its laws would be punished by death.'"<sup>1</sup> Indeed "it was firmly believed that God Almighty was both a diligent student of the Torah, and also Himself obeyed its provisions."<sup>2</sup> Thus the Law was revered, we might truly say, as God's great masterpiece. It was the unique treasure of Israel, which God had graciously entrusted to them, and to which they owed their position as "the Chosen Race." Moreover it was upon the keeping of this Law that, they believed, the coming of the Messiah and the Day of the Lord depended. The full significance of the attitude of Jesus towards the Law will be at once apparent. The meaning of His bold contrast: "The old Law says . . . but *I* say unto you" could not have been missed by His hearers. It was in the first place a criticism of the "Law" for not carrying its own fundamental principles far enough and thus falling short of the perfection claimed for it.<sup>3</sup> Moreover only one who claimed to be the Representative of God would have thus openly contrasted His personal authority with that of the "Law." The contrast is hardly less pointed in Jesus' sayings about the patch in the garment and the new wine in the old bottles; the old teaching professed to be based on the "Law," and that alone; Jesus' teaching was something new, something that could not be confined within those old forms but would burst its way through them (Matt. ix, 16-17). The claim is again explicitly affirmed in the statement: "The dispensation of

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 41.

<sup>2</sup> See Oesterley and Box, *op. cit.*, pp. 161-77, 189. The whole of Chapter vii is invaluable.

<sup>3</sup> See pp. 55 f., *supra*.

the Law and the Prophets continued until the time of John; but since then 'the Gospel' is being proclaimed" (Luke xvi, 16). A favourite Rabbinic metaphor for the duty of obedience to the "Law" was "the yoke of the Law"<sup>1</sup>: "Take *my* yoke upon you (said Jesus) and learn from *me*." And He continues "*I* will give you rest"—a quotation which, above all in that context, would at once remind Jesus' hearers that in the passage of Jeremiah from which the words are taken it is Jehovah Himself Who offers His people "rest" if they will come to Him; Jesus is, therefore, speaking, as so often, deliberately as God's Representative.<sup>2</sup> If there were any doubt it would be removed by the next words: "No one knows the Father except the Son,<sup>3</sup> and those to whom the Son is ready to reveal Him"—Jesus is the Revealer of God, possessing the true knowledge of Him, and standing in a unique relationship to Him (Matt. xi, 29; cf. Jer. vi, 16, xxxi-25). The Law is again criticised in Jesus' deliberate declaration, made in answer to a challenge purposely offered to test Him on this very point, that the Mosaic law of divorce was ill-considered and bad in its effects (Mark x, 1-9); and yet again, by implication, in Jesus' refusal to sanction the stoning of the woman taken in adultery (John viii, 1-11). The Law laid great stress on the observing of the Sabbath. This has always been a matter of vital importance to the Jews.<sup>4</sup> Jesus not only broke the Law of the Sabbath and allowed His

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Acts xv, 10; Gal. v, 1; 2 Baruch xli, 3.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Mark i, 14-15; ii, 5-11; ix, 37; Luke iv, 18-21; vii, 18-23; x, 16, 17-24; xiii, 35; Matt. xi, 28-30; xii, 6, 22-32; xxv, 31, 40.

<sup>3</sup> See p. 110 *supra*, note.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. *Tractate Shabbath*, ed. Oesterley. The rigid view is given in *The Book of Jubilees*, ch. 50.

disciples to do the same, but deliberately claimed that He had a right to do so as the Son of Man. The Law attached great importance to the regulations about ceremonial cleanliness and defilement; Jesus swept the whole network of these regulations aside as superficial and misleading. The Old Testament jealously preserves the prerogative to forgive sins for God Himself. Jesus openly forgave sin, and when His outraged critics protested against the "blasphemy" He calmly replied that as Son of Man He had "authority on earth to forgive sins." The combined effect of such an attitude and such claims on orthodox Jews, above all on the religious leaders who prided themselves beyond everything on their strict regard for the Law and knowledge of the true God, could only be fully appreciated by those who themselves shared such convictions about the Law and the position of the Messiah in the world order. For Jesus' attitude was in fact a claim to an insight superior to that of the author of the Law, and an authority to criticise and amend it that few orthodox Jews would have admitted to belong to the Messiah Himself.<sup>1</sup>

Pharisees and Sadducees alike held this conception of the Law. The Sadducees went no further; they confined themselves strictly to the Law and refused to admit the validity of the commentaries which were elaborated by the Rabbis. They were therefore not concerned with Jesus' criticism of the latter. But on the other hand they would consider themselves very seriously concerned with His popularity. They mostly belonged to the aristocratic families from whom the high priests were selected; they administered the Temple, and they

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Oesterley and Box, *op. cit.*, p. 236.

enjoyed the patronage of the Romans. They were, therefore, strongly opposed to political agitation, advocated a policy of *laissez-faire*, and frowned on anything that might tend to bring the nation into conflict with the civil authorities and lose them their prerogatives. They probably regarded Jesus as a dangerous fanatic whose head had been turned by His popularity, and who suffered from the insane delusion that He was the Messiah ; they feared that He might at any moment cause an outbreak among the excitable crowds and so draw on them the active displeasure of Rome. And to all this was subsequently added the more personal motive of anger at Jesus' behaviour after His arrival in Jerusalem.

The Pharisees were not in sympathy with the Sadducees on the latter point. Most of them, at least, shared the national hatred of the foreign rulers. But they, too,<sup>1</sup> had a particular grievance against Jesus. Their Rabbis had developed a body of doctrine which purported to be an interpretation and development of the Mosaic Law, and which by now formed an extremely elaborate and detailed series of "traditions" ; these were accepted by their stricter followers as being no less sacred and binding than the Law itself, and their origin was attributed to Moses. Jesus' criticism of the latter was more radical and outspoken than His criticism of the Law. He refused to be bound by them, condemned many of them as irrelevant, immoral and superficial, and publicly denounced the spirit that too frequently inspired them. The Pharisees were regarded by the majority of the people as their religious leaders, and the Scribes were held in great

<sup>1</sup> But see again Oesterley and Box, *op. cit.*, p. 127-30.

veneration as the guardians and interpreters of the "traditions." They were not likely to be tolerant of criticism from outside their own ranks, above all from "a man of the people." They had thus their own reasons for hating the master of irony who criticised them so fearlessly in the presence of the crowds.

The civil authorities were no more favourably disposed towards a man who wielded such dangerous popular influence. Herod had excellent reasons for being extremely suspicious of all popular leaders, above all of "religious" leaders, who appealed more strongly than anyone else to the intense national consciousness and pious fervour of his subjects. Josephus' account of John the Baptist's death is illuminating: "Now when many others came in crowds about him (John), for they were greatly pleased by his words, Herod, who feared lest the great influence that John had over the people might put it in his power and inclination to raise rebellion (for they seemed to do anything he should advise) thought it best, by putting him to death, to prevent any mischief that he might cause."<sup>1</sup> Hardly less so is the tradition about the Magi and "the massacre of the innocents" recorded in the first Gospel (Matt. ii, 1-18). This story is told of another Herod, but it admirably reveals the contemporary background. Thus, a man causing great popular excitement and rumoured to be Messiah would be summarily dealt with if he came into Herod's power. And, in fact, Herod had left no room for doubt about his intentions regarding Jesus (Luke xiii, 31-33). Pilate, as Roman governor of Judea, was as little likely to tolerate a "popular

<sup>1</sup> Josephus *Ant.* xviii, v. 2.

hero" as was Herod; he too knew from experience of what the fanatical religious temper of the Jews was capable when roused. It seems not unlikely that Barabbas was such a popular leader, and he was actually in prison at the time of Jesus' trial. And Pilate had recently had trouble with the Galileans in particular (Luke xiii, 1).

All the civil and religious authorities were therefore united against Jesus and were only waiting, it would seem, for a convenient opportunity to put Him out of the way. The outcome must have been clear even to a man with less insight than Jesus.

In these circumstances what could Jesus do but either give up His work altogether and retire into private life, or else go on defying the leaders by preaching His new message and working cures until He was finally arrested and executed? The first course would mean abandoning His Messiahship, His new revelation of God, and His works of healing and pity, and leaving the world to its own ignorance and folly. To a man of Jesus' character and convictions, this was impossible. The second would involve a risk, amounting to a practical certainty, that His message would perish with Him; who would believe any longer in a crucified "criminal"? Jesus, therefore, must needs die discredited, and His message of God, the great Lover, be lost altogether—unless indeed anyone could be found to understand and preserve His message and carry on His work after His death. There was still that one hope. This explains why, when the situation began to grow dangerous, Jesus selected the Twelve to be His intimate companions. The records indicate clearly enough that these men

shared the popular misconceptions about the "Messianic" hope; but they loved and trusted Jesus personally, and they were ready to give up all and follow Him. Surely constant intimacy might be trusted to lead to a better understanding. So they had been chosen "that they might remain with Him." But in spite of this intimacy Jesus failed to make them understand His secret. He then took them away for long tours in remote places, where He could find leisure to open out His mind to them, without danger of interruption. But even so He still failed to make them understand, as Peter's vehement protests when Jesus referred to suffering as the lot of the Messiah prove. Indeed, the sequel shows that they never did grasp the essential facts of His message up to the very end.<sup>1</sup> The situation was indeed disquieting. These men were His last hope, and yet they seemed to be incapable of understanding His message; and meanwhile the opposing forces were closing in on Jesus swiftly, and the time was short. If He did not find some way of preserving and handing on His secret before the blow fell, both He and it would be lost irretrievably.

His solution of this problem has the simplicity and effectiveness of the highest genius. His disciples, it is true, misunderstood Him; but they also loved Him; they had been His friends for years; they had sacrificed everything to follow Him; they had lived with Him in the closest

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Mark ix, 33-37; x, 35-45; Luke states (xxii, 24-27) that even during the last supper they quarrelled about precedence. This tradition would explain the washing of the feet recorded in John xiii, 1-16. Cf. also Acts i, 6, which states that when Jesus appeared *after* the Resurrection the disciples asked, "Lord, are you going to restore the Kingdom to Israel *now*?"

intimacy, watching His actions and behaviour, listening to all He said, sharing His thoughts ; they were aware of His popularity and of the popular opinions about Him ; they had witnessed His works of healing. And in the end their devotion could only find expression in the conviction that He was the Messiah. This devotion, based on intimacy, was the final hope on which Jesus determined to stake everything. The disciples had heard His message, His "good news of God," again and again. If they had not been so absorbed in their own dreams of Messiahship and the Kingdom, they must have realised the significance of His words long ago. As it was, however, these words beat in vain on their unyielding prejudice and slowness of mind.<sup>1</sup> When He spoke of the Kingdom they read their own meaning into what He said : the rest was unintelligible and they ignored it. And thus, though the message was in reality "there," graven on their memories, their understanding was perverted—so perverted that they actually thought that in all essentials Jesus shared their view of Messiahship and the Kingdom. This spelt disaster. For so long as they believed that, their minds would remain impervious to any other conception ; and if He were arrested and put to death while they still believed it, their faith in Him would be shattered while their belief in their own conceptions would remain unchanged. A "world-subduing Messiah" Who was arrested and executed as a criminal would, by the mere fact of His death, be exposed as either an impostor or a blinded fanatic,

<sup>1</sup> Luke is very emphatic : "They did not understand a word of what he said ; a veil was over their minds which concealed his meaning from them" (Luke xviii, 34)—a thrice-emphasised repetition. Cf. Mark's phrase (vi, 52).



and the whole belief in His Messiahship as a sheer delusion. At any cost, therefore, Jesus must make it impossible for the disciples to go on believing that He shared their conception. Once He succeeded in doing that, instead of His death ruining all, it would be the very means of at last dispelling the preoccupation of the disciples with their own dreams and compel them to fix their eyes on Jesus and ask themselves what He had meant; and then His real message would have its opportunity. Was there any means of effecting this? There was. What if, instead of waiting to be arrested, He were to go to Jerusalem before their eyes and *publicly challenge death on the issue of His Messiahship?* That would dispel their illusions once and for all.

Jesus now sees His way lie clear before Him. He will tell the disciples plainly that He is going to Jerusalem to die, and write it on their memories in unforgettable words and unforgettable actions that He has deliberately chosen this path because He is the Messiah; He will warn them at every step of the way that He is going to His death; He will point them literally to the Cross. He will enter Jerusalem as a king; He will fling down challenge after challenge to the priests and leaders, until He compels them to take up the challenge and condemn Him (if condemn Him they must) on the sole issue of His claim to Messiahship. By doing this He would force the disciples to recognise that, so far from His death being an unforeseen disaster unexpectedly putting an end to His career and proving Him (like them) to be mistaken, the deliberate choice of it was involved in His very conception of Messiahship. But if the deliberate choice of death was the outcome of Jesus' conception of Messiah-

ship, and if their own conception of it could find no place for suffering and death, the two must be irreconcilable ; thus the disciples would no longer be able to believe both that He was the Messiah and that their messianic ideal was a true one. They would then be confronted with a dilemma from which there would be no escape : either Jesus must have been guilty of a fatal error in His judgment about the central belief of His life, and have deliberately sacrificed Himself for a delusion, or else the old conception of Messiahship must be completely mistaken. But could they believe that the Jesus whom they had learnt to know was disastrously wrong on the fundamental issue while they were right ? It was unthinkable. The alternative, however amazing, must be true. What, then, was this conception of Messiahship which drove their Master to death and disgrace at Jerusalem, and which could not be any that they or their religious teachers shared ? They had been listening to Him telling that secret ever since they were chosen "to be with Him." And now the spell of their own dreams which had clouded their understanding would be broken at last. Surely something of the message so often and so impressively stated would flash into their minds bringing light, and then they would remember and understand ? There was, indeed, a terrible risk ; for if they failed to understand even then, and clung to their old conceptions, Jesus' message was lost beyond recovery. But His faith had to support it all the strength of His personality, all the power of their long and deep intimacy and friendship, all the loyalty and devotion of their hearts. It was only their understanding which was so dull and slow.

This risk, therefore, Jesus had determined to face.

It was an inspiration of genius to have found this solution to the overwhelming problem that beset Him. But the cost to Jesus Himself was terrible. In the prime of life, richly endowed in mind and body, overflowing with vitality, keenly sensitive to beauty and friendship, and the whole "tragi-comedy of human life," He must deliberately sacrifice everything and go to die a cruel and lingering death ; and He must do it alone, with no one to understand or support Him, amid shame and contempt and the visible triumph of His bitterest enemies ; while behind all lay the appalling risk that the disciples would after all fail to understand or remember, would lose heart and believe that He had died mistaken and a failure. It is, indeed, impossible fully to imagine all that it must have meant to Jesus thus to turn His back on life and, risking all, steadily to face the growing reality of that grim procession of condemned criminals and put Himself in the place of that man with the face of despair carrying his own cross to execution. And yet Jesus faced it and chose it with open eyes in order that men might no longer be estranged from God. He had told His followers that for Love's sake they should not resist evil but should meet hatred and persecution, coarseness and contempt and violence, with unfailing generosity and Love. He would now Himself give the supreme example of this Divine Love which He had so consistently preached and lived. Men had met His message with incredible misunderstanding and stupidity on the one side, and with contempt and hatred on the other ; but rather than let them remain deluded and embittered He would choose shame and a cruel

death on their behalf—death at the hands of the very men who hated and despised Him—if by any means, at long last, He might thereby reveal to them His secret and win them to the God and the Kingdom of Love.

Meanwhile, everything depended on His so impressing His message and purpose on the minds of His disciples that, though they might misunderstand Him at the moment, they would never be able to forget. And to this task He now addresses Himself. It was for this end that He took the disciples to Cæsarea Philippi and deliberately asked them who they thought Him to be. Peter's answer, "You are the Messiah," was the assurance for which He had been waiting, and now that it was given He could carry out His final purpose. This was what He meant when He told Peter that his conviction was indeed the Divine revelation on which the Kingdom would be founded. But He needed time to prepare His friends for what was coming ; and so to their surprise He checked them. They would naturally wish to inform everyone that their Master had at last declared Himself plainly as the Messiah. No, not yet, He says ; there is something more to be understood clearly first. "And from that time on" He began to warn the disciples that the Son of Man must suffer and die, and that to follow Him would be joining a procession of condemned criminals. Impossible! cries Peter, aghast. It is the literal truth, answers Jesus.

(ii) *The Transfiguration.*

But before setting out for Jerusalem Jesus follows His habitual practice of thinking the matter out to the end in the presence of God. He takes with

Him His most intimate friends, Peter and James and John, and goes into the hills with them alone. There He spends the time in thought and prayer. According to the pictorial description given in the synoptists, Jesus meets "Moses and Elijah"; that is to say, He consults the Law and the prophets<sup>1</sup> (Luke ix, 30-31; Mark ix, 4). What illumination He found in the experiences there recorded may be inferred with certainty. The story of all the prophets was the same; each one of them in turn became conscious of having a special message from God for their people; each of them received a special call to deliver it; their message was always rejected during their own lifetime, and they themselves were persecuted and sometimes killed; *but after their death the truth for which they had sacrificed themselves had always prevailed*; they were then accepted as true prophets of God, and their message incorporated in the sacred records of their race. The martyrs of one generation became the heroes and saints of their children.<sup>2</sup> Thus history had proved again and again that the death of the "man of God" had accomplished what his life and words alone had failed to do, it had convinced men that his message came from God. The redeeming power of suffering and martyrdom was never more clearly shown than in their story. And how profoundly one at least of their prophets had reflected on this fact is indicated in the famous fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, in which the conception of the salvation of the race by another's sufferings is portrayed with strange intensity and beauty. With His

<sup>1</sup> Elijah was also the forerunner of the Messiah; he may represent the spirit of the Messianic hope in the prophets.

<sup>2</sup> As Jesus himself pointed out; e.g., Matt. xxiii, 29-31.

thoughts thus full of the story of the prophets<sup>1</sup>—their call and sufferings and martyrdom and triumph, when He Himself had just determined to die for His own message, surely Jesus' mind cannot have failed to dwell on this picture of God's suffering servants, which transmuted all the mystery of their travail and rejection into a splendid faith that their very sufferings would be the means of their ultimate triumph. Was not this faith the secret of Jesus' own determination to share their fate? Here was confirmation indeed to strengthen His purpose and assure Him of the wisdom of His decision.

Jesus has lived through their experiences again in the presence of God, and sought to learn God's will for Himself. He has found the answer. And now there comes to Him once more, with renewed certainty and intimacy, the old assurance of God's Fatherhood and His Sonship, and of God's full approval of Jesus' purpose as His Messiah. At the height of that experience, God the great Lover came down to meet the most loving man Who ever trod this earth, the man Who had lived to make "the Father" known to men and bring in His Kingdom and was now setting out to die for His sake. Of that meeting no words could convey an adequate description; but the three men who were with Jesus stood amazed at the radiance in His face; His very garments seemed to grow luminous with reflected glory (Luke ix, 29; Matt. xvii, 2). The disciples who were "drowsing" (Luke ix, 32) awoke to see this vision, and gazed bewildered and awe-struck at the change in their Master: "they fell on their faces and were sore afraid." But Jesus, seeing

<sup>1</sup> Cf. e.g. Mark xii, 1 f.; Luke xi, 47, xiii, 33-34.

this, "came and touched them (the familiar gesture) and said, Rise up; do not be afraid. And they looked up and saw Jesus standing there alone" (Matt. xvii, 6-8).<sup>1</sup> As they leave the place Jesus again impresses on them the importance of being silent about what they have witnessed; they must tell no one of what they have seen "until after the resurrection." The words strike them. From the first Jesus had never mentioned His sufferings and death without adding that He would "rise again." If, as He explicitly stated later on, the friendship of God is the one sufficient guarantee of immortality this God of Love would certainly never let His "well beloved Son" Who was dying for His sake pass away altogether. Jesus could not die: His work was scarcely begun. He was therefore confident from the very first that when His body was killed, He would "rise from the dead." But the disciples who were not dreaming of death were only bewildered at His words: "They were struck by the saying, and began discussing among themselves what the remark about rising again could mean" (Mark ix, 6-10; Matt. xvii, 1-9; Luke ix, 28-36). On the way back they ask Him why the Scribes have been asserting that "Elijah" must come before the Messiah, to "prepare his way." Jesus replies that he has already come, and has met the

<sup>1</sup> The accounts suggest some sort of mystical experience. Luke says they were *βεβαρημένοι θπρω* (ver. 32)—(they fell into a trance?). Perhaps Jesus told them that he was going to consult "Moses and the prophets" about the future of his Messiahship. They were in a state of great emotion and fear *ἐφοβήθησαν δὲ ἐν τῷ εἰσελθεῖν αὐτοὺς εἰς τὴν νεφέλην* (ver. 34), and in this condition see a vision of Moses and Elijah. Peter stammers out some words without realising what he is saying, *μὴ εἰδὼς ὁ λέγει* (ver. 33). They hear a divine voice assuring them that Jesus is the Messiah of God (v, 35). As they hear it the vision suddenly passes and they see Jesus there alone (v, 36).

usual treatment that prophets received ; and that Jesus Himself is about to suffer the same fate. They realise then that He is referring to John the Baptist. (Mark ix, 11-13 ; Matt. xvii, 10-13).

(iii) *The Last Journey.*

Jesus now starts on His last journey to the Holy City. He has first of all to pass through Galilee, and He spends the time alone with the Twelve, working no cures, carefully avoiding everything that might attract attention, and devoting Himself entirely to preparing His disciples for what was coming. "He passed through Galilee. And He was anxious that no one should know it, for He was impressing upon the disciples that the Son of Man was going to be delivered into the hands of His enemies, and that they would kill Him, but that He would rise again" (Mark ix, 30-31). The Twelve listen to Him in growing amazement, and an indefinable foreboding creeps into their hearts. For Jesus is speaking most impressively : "Let my words sink deep into your minds," He says. It cannot be true ; He is their Messiah !—and yet He had never been more deeply in earnest. They are "painfully distressed" (Matt. xvii, 23). But, strangely enough, they are "afraid to ask Him what He means" (Mark ix, 32 ; Luke ix, 45). This fear is a new thing, for they had long ago formed the habit of discussing all their difficulties with Him. As He walks on, silent and preoccupied, they gradually fall behind and begin talking among themselves. But the sureness of His insight into their characters is proved by the fact that as soon as they find themselves alone for a little they lapse into a dispute about their relative importance in the



expected earthly kingdom. In spite of all His warnings, they do not really believe in their hearts that Jesus will be put to death, that there will be no kingdom in the sense in which they understand it. It must be a mistake—more of His unintelligible language that was always baffling them. The great earthly kingdom was the reality, and their place in it, and they turn with relief to that comforting fact and forget their bewilderment and distress. On reaching Capernaum Jesus asked them what they were disputing about. They were confused and remained silent; “For they had been disputing which of them was to be the greatest. And He sat down and called the Twelve round Him. And He said to them: If any one wishes to be the greatest of you all, he must be the most humble of all, the servant of all” (Mark ix, 33-37).

As He continues His journey a significant warning reaches Him: “There came some Pharisees to Him, saying: Leave this place, for Herod means to kill you. Jesus replied: Then go and tell that crafty fox that though I am performing public cures again, it will only be for two days longer and then that part of My work will be complete—(the warning is unnecessary, Jesus is already on the way to meet His fate at Jerusalem)—but I must continue My journey for two more days; for it would never do for a prophet to be put to death anywhere but in Jerusalem!” Then the pity of these needless tragedies comes over Him: “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who killest the prophets and stonest the messengers of God. How often would I have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you refused; and now your house is left to you desolate. You will never

see Me again until you are ready to welcome Me with the greeting, 'Blessed is God's Representative' " (Luke xiii, 31-35).

During all this last part of His ministry Jesus had confined Himself mainly to explaining "the Gospel" to His disciples privately. He had recently forbidden them even to speak about His claims to Messiahship until after His death. These precautions had been forced upon Him by the difficulties with which He was surrounded. But it was far from being His ultimate intention; and it was most important that the disciples should realise that He was only telling them in secret in order that they might make it as widely known as possible afterwards. "What I am telling you now in the dark, you must repeat in the full light of day; what I am whispering to you privately, you are to proclaim from the housetops. For nothing has been concealed which is not to be revealed (to all), or hidden which is not to be made known" (Luke xii, 2, 3).

But now Jesus has reached the fords of Jordan and His whole behaviour changes.

(iv) *Through Judea to Jerusalem.*

Up to this time Jesus has been travelling as unostentatiously as possible, avoiding the crowds and even the villages where He would be likely to be recognised, doing no works of healing, and teaching only the disciples. But as soon as He crosses the Jordan He leaves His retirement and deliberately challenges public attention. "He entered Judea beyond the Jordan; and the crowds resorted to Him again; and He began teaching them again, as He used to do before" (Mark x, 1). Almost

immediately the Pharisees hear of it and open a definite campaign to undermine His popularity. Their first attempt is to bring Him into open conflict with the Law of Moses, and so alienate the orthodox observers of the Law<sup>1</sup> (Matt. xix, 3 f.). Knowing Jesus' sympathy with women they approach Him on the question of divorce. Jesus refers them to God's purposes as revealed in an older quotation and frankly criticises the laxity of the Law. The disciples take the ordinary human view of the matter: If that is the case, they say, it would be better for a man not to marry at all. Jesus readily admits that it is a "hard saying"; but He adds that a man may have to make even greater sacrifices than that for the Kingdom. There are some men who are naturally incapable of married union, and others who have been made so by man; but there are a few persons with a normal sexual nature, capable of married union and parenthood, who sacrifice its consummation altogether for the Kingdom (Matt. xix, 10-12). Jesus had only just stated that the two sexes were deliberately created by the God of Love for a great end, and that this purpose was too sacred to be thwarted lightly. And yet He Himself was one of these men who, fully endowed with this great natural gift, deliberately cut themselves off from its fruition for the sake of the Kingdom. Something of the cost of that sacrifice may be felt in the saying that the wild creatures have their lairs and the birds their nests, but the Son of Man had no home. Perhaps it may be felt, too, in that other "hard saying," that a man must be prepared to sacrifice anything whatever, even though it seems as natural and indis-

<sup>1</sup> The Judeans were more strictly orthodox than the Galileans.

pensable to him as his hand or foot, if it stands in the way of the Kingdom of Love (Mark ix, 43-48). On the lips of the Man Who spent His life healing men and restoring their lost faculties, these words carry an unusual significance. It is only necessary to think of the friendliness and tenderness of Jesus as revealed in the story of the prostitute who entered the Pharisee's house, or the devotion of Mary of Magdala, or again of His love for little children, which the very next incident in the narrative<sup>1</sup> displays, to understand the poignancy of the saying that He, of all men, could have no home of His own, though the humblest of God's creatures might. Until He was thirty years old Jesus had to work for His mother and younger brothers and sisters. When they were old enough to relieve Him of that responsibility, another and greater claim laid its hand upon Him. If He had been preoccupied with a wife and children of His own, He could never have been free to carry His message of the supremacy of Love, which the world needed above everything else, to the men of His day. It was the overwhelming claims of the God of Love and His Kingdom that compelled Jesus to sacrifice everything, including home and comfort and ultimately His very life itself . . . And yet, after all this, the disciples were still left dreaming of their coming greatness (Mark x, 17-31).

They are now getting near to Jerusalem ; and as the final crisis approaches the tension in Jesus' mind becomes too apparent to be ignored. He again falls into silence and strides ahead, wrapped in thought. As they watch curiosity turns into amazement, and amazement into fear (Mark x, 32). Before long He reveals what was preoccupying

<sup>1</sup> Mark x, 13-16.

Him : " He called the disciples apart and said to them again : Remember, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man is about to be delivered into the power of the Chief Priests and Scribes ; they will condemn Him to death, and hand Him over to the Gentile rulers ; they will take advantage of their triumph to deride Him and spit on Him ; and then He will be scourged and put to death ; but He will rise again " (Mark x, 32-34). Even now, however, the disciples are too blind to see His meaning (Luke xviii, 34). Then, as the crowd gathers round them again, Jesus turns to them and makes a public announcement of the coming tragedy. " Great multitudes were now following Him ; and He turned round and said to them : If any man would follow Me, and does not *hate* his own father and mother . . . and brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life too, he cannot be My disciple ; if he is not ready to shoulder his own cross and come with Me to crucifixion he cannot be My disciple " (Luke xiv, 25-27). Perhaps we may guess at the experience which lies behind that significant word "*hate*." He is saying openly that He is going up to Jerusalem to die ; His mother hears of it ; anxious and bewildered, she sets out to find Him and pleads with Him to give up this strange course that He is pursuing ; it is madness ; let Him come home with her to Nazareth and work for her again, resume the old happy relationship when He was still her son, her support and comfort. Jesus, distressed at her pain, puts her appeal gently but resolutely aside. At last she sees that it is no use pleading any longer and prepares to go. Why is He so changed ? " You used to love me," she cries, " do you hate me now that

you can treat me thus ? ” And so she leaves Him, and Jesus goes on to die. But the scene is branded on His mind ; He cannot forget her last words. And now, when the final struggle approaches, He turns to the crowds : If you wish to follow Me now, He says, you will have to cut yourselves off from those whom you love most. They will accuse you of hating them ; very well, you must “ hate ” them ; you must put home, with all its memories, behind you, and go to meet contempt and death for the Kingdom of God. Shortly afterwards there occurs another incident which reveals once more the complete inability of the disciples to understand Jesus. James and John persuade their mother to come to Him with a request that He will do whatever they ask ; and it appears that what they desire is the right to occupy the two posts of honour in the Kingdom on the right and left hand of the throne. That is not the real question, answers Jesus ; ask yourselves instead how much you are prepared to do and to endure in the great cause. As for these other matters, leave them to God ; they are not your concern—or mine. The rest of the disciples are, of course, indignant ; but Jesus recalls them to their senses with a flash of the old humour. You know, He says, that among the Gentiles the chief men are those who celebrate their despotism by styling themselves the people’s “ Benefactors.”<sup>1</sup> It must not be so among you ; if any of you would become “ the great,”<sup>2</sup> it must be by faithful service of the rest ; and whoever would be “ the all-highest ”<sup>3</sup> must be “ the slave of every-

<sup>1</sup> *Euergetæ*—the self-chosen title of the Ptolemies.

<sup>2</sup> The Roman titles “ Magnus ” and “ Maximus,” as in Alexander “ the great.” Maximus was now one of the regular titles of the Roman Emperors ; this lends point to the contrast : lord of all, slave of all.

one." "For in very truth the Son of Man Himself has come, not to be served by others, but to serve them, and finally to sacrifice His own life to redeem many from slavery"<sup>1</sup> (Mark x, 35-45; Luke xxii, 25-27). . . . Outside Jericho they pass a famous blind beggar sitting by the roadside. Hearing the crowd approaching, he asks what is happening, and is told that "it is Jesus of Nazareth passing by." At once he begins crying out "Jesus, Son of David, have pity on me," until Jesus calls him and restores his sight. Bartimæus has addressed Jesus by the Messianic title, "Son of David"; the cure is performed in full view of the crowd; and this time\* the restored sufferer is allowed to follow without Jesus making any effort to silence him (Mark x, 46-52). Popular excitement is intensified as Jesus draws nearer to Jerusalem. The disciples themselves seem to have been carried away by the general enthusiasm, and, in spite of all Jesus' warnings about His death, to have begun to hope that He is about to bring in the long-expected Kingdom by a decisive "Messianic" intervention, for Jesus finds it necessary to give them a plain warning. "He also told them a parable, because He was approaching Jerusalem and they imagined that the Kingdom of God was about to appear immediately. He therefore said: A certain king went into a *far distant* country to win a kingdom" (Luke xix, 11-27; Matt. xxv, 14-30).<sup>3</sup> The disciples expected to be carried to their thrones (Matt. xix, 28) on a swift tide of acclamation and victory. Jesus warns them

<sup>1</sup> Again a contrast; he becomes "the slave of all" that he may set them free from slavery.

<sup>2</sup> Contrast pp. 134-138, *supra*.

<sup>3</sup> In Matthew's parable the warning is even more direct. "*After a long time the Master returned*" (v. 19).

that a long period of service, of strenuous use of God's gifts, lies in front of them before the kingdom can be won and the King return. They still misconceived the service they owed to God, and its reward; Jesus once more alters the entire perspective. The harsh, exacting character of the king in the story<sup>1</sup> is insisted upon (Luke xix, 14, 21-27; Matt. xxv, 30); if, then, strict justice and the rigid claims of an admittedly harsh task-master imposed such obligations on His subjects, what should be the return made to God the Great Giver Whose royal generosity, so far from expecting "to reap where He has not sown," "sends His rain and sunshine on the unrighteous as well as the righteous, and is kind to the unthankful and evil"? It is not to brilliant ambitions that Love summons men, but to the most strenuous and eager use of every gift to the utmost in the service of the King.

(v) *The "Triumphal Entry" into Jerusalem.*

"And they came to Bethphage and Bethany on the hill of Olives, overlooking Jerusalem" (Mark xi, 1). Hitherto Jesus has satisfied Himself with emphasising His claim to Messiahship in words only. He now publicly enforces that claim again and again by the most striking actions. There was a famous saying that "the King" would enter Jerusalem riding upon the colt of an ass, which was regarded as a messianic prophecy<sup>2</sup>:

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion;  
Shout O daughter of Jerusalem.  
Behold, thy King cometh unto thee,  
Crowned with triumph and victory.  
Lowly He comes, riding upon an ass,  
Even upon a colt the foal of an ass (Zech. ix, 9.)

<sup>1</sup> Herod?

<sup>2</sup> For references see Edersheim, *Life and Times*, vol. ii, p. 736.



Jesus now deliberately plans to fulfil this prophecy. If we consider His previous attempts to avoid exciting popular hopes, this meaning of the act becomes unmistakable. "He sent two of his disciples ahead with instructions to go into the village opposite. Just as you enter the village (He said) you will see a colt tied up, on which no one has ever yet sat; loose it and bring it here; and if anyone asks you why you are doing this say 'The Master needs it' and he will allow you to take it."<sup>1</sup> And they brought the colt to Jesus and threw some cloaks over it; and Jesus sat on it. And the crowd began spreading their coats on the road before Him, and strewing it with branches of trees which they had cut down; and the multitudes in front and behind began shouting 'Hosanna! Blessed is the One Who cometh in the Name of God'; blessed is the Kingdom that cometh, the Kingdom of our Father David" (Mark xi, 1-10). "And as He approached the city and came to the descent of Olivet, the whole multitude was seized with enthusiasm and began shouting praises to God. And some of the Pharisees who were in the crowd said to Jesus: Rabbi, tell your followers to be silent. Jesus replied, I tell you that if these men were to be silent the very stones would cry out! And when Jesus came in sight of the city He wept over it, saying: If only you had known this day, even you, what could really bring you peace—but no, you are blind to it. And so the time is approaching when your enemies

<sup>1</sup> The details of the entry had therefore been deliberately arranged beforehand by Jesus.

<sup>2</sup> i.e., God's representative Cf. Luke xiii, 35. "The Kingdom of our father David" is the popular "Messianic" Kingdom; probably there is a reference to Ps. cxviii, the same psalm referred to in Mark xii, 10-11. See p 186 *infra*.

will besiege you and slay your inhabitants. They will not leave one stone upon another. And all because you were blind to the Day of God's visitation"<sup>1</sup> (Luke xix, 37 f.). "And when He reached Jerusalem all the city was thrown into excitement, and asked, Who is this? ; and the crowds replied : This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee" (Matt. xxi, 10-11). Thus did Jesus enter Jerusalem for the last time, as a king with royal honours. "And when He had entered Jerusalem He went into the Temple and looked round at everything ; and then, as it was now evening, He returned with the Twelve to Bethany" (Mark xi, 11).

(vi) *The Last Days.*

What He saw on that first evening in the Temple moved Him to a new assertion of His Messianic prerogative. For His first action next day is to fling down a deliberate challenge to the priestly party, as the avowed Representative of God. The Temple precincts were being used as a place of barter.<sup>2</sup> "And He said to them : Did not Isaiah say 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations'? But you have made it 'a den of thieves.'" The quotations reveal the ground upon which Jesus took His stand in this open defiance of the Temple authorities. In Isaiah it is God Himself Who declares that His Temple is to be a house of prayer

<sup>1</sup> The Day of the Lord.

<sup>2</sup> The rapacity of the High Priests is bitterly criticised in contemporary Jewish literature. It is quite possible that profiteering went on there. But Jesus evidently regarded the sales as typical of the cynical materialism and greed which allowed the country to be bled white for the advantage of the priests and the Temple treasury. Huge sums were hoarded there. As the priestly tithes, etc., were enjoined in the Law and reinforced by Ezekiel and Ezra, the Pharisees had to make it a point of honour to support them.

for all nations; and again, in the passage from Jeremiah, it is God Himself Who protests that His house is being turned into a robbers' den. And it was God's name which was being degraded in men's eyes by this abuse. Jesus appeals to this declared purpose of God and His remonstrance through the mouth of the prophet; and then publicly, as God's Representative, vindicates God's character and clears His House of the offence. The Chief Priests at once hear of it and take up the challenge (Mark xi, 18). The Scribes, finding bands of children in the Temple singing "Hosanna to the Son of David," exclaim indignantly: Do you hear what these children are saying? Yes, replies Jesus; did you never read an old saying that "out of the mouths of babes and sucklings thou hast produced the perfect praise"? It is a famous quotation, and they are at a loss for an answer. They are no less disconcerted at the boldness of the reply; for "the Son of David" was a title of the Messiah (cf. Mark xii, 35); and so far from preventing the children from using this form of greeting, Jesus quietly asserts it to be the perfect truth (Matt. xxi, 15, 16). There can be no compromise now: "The Chief Priests and Scribes and leaders of the people began to look for some means of putting Him to death; but they did not know how to do it. For all the people were listening to Him with breathless attention" (Luke xix, 47, 48)—they had wished before to "come and make Him a king by force," but He had then refused—was He coming forward to lead them at last? . . . Jesus is now going out every night to Bethany on Mount Olivet, and returning every morning to teach in the Temple. Probably His leaving the city before night-fall had a definite purpose. He

was not yet ready for His arrest ; He needed more time if He was to make His challenge clear and the issue plain beyond possibility of mistake. He knew that His enemies would not dare to arrest Him openly in broad daylight. The danger was lest they should make away with Him secretly under cover of the dark. If He avoided the city after dark this could not happen. . . The next morning when He arrives at the Temple He finds the Temple authorities waiting for Him with the Scribes and Elders. They challenge Him at once : " What is your authority for acting as you have done, and who gave you the authority ? " (Mark xi, 27-33). Jesus determines to test their sincerity. John the Baptist had an established reputation as a prophet ; and he had openly testified his admiration of Jesus ; in all probability he had recognised Jesus' claims to be " the Coming One. " If they admitted the right of John to be called a prophet, they would also have to admit that Jesus had, at the very least, a serious claim to consideration. Moreover Jesus' authority rested on the same ground as that of John. As a matter of fact they did not admit John's claims ; but they did not dare to deny them in the face of popular opinion. And therefore when Jesus asked them whether they regarded John as a prophet they were in a dilemma. They were planning to arrest Jesus ; the one thing that stood in their way was His popularity ; their first step must be to undermine it. Thus the very last thing they could afford to do was to risk their own influence. But to admit publicly that they did not believe in John would be to alienate the sympathy of the people from themselves and enhance the popularity of Jesus. They could therefore

### *The Man of Nazareth*

for her admit it or deny it. So they answered *J*'We do not know"—a cowardly evasion which Jesus exposes in the parable of the two sons (Matt. xxi, 28-32). Whether they were willing to admit it now or not, everyone knew that they had rejected John's appeal. The very outcasts had put them to shame ! The criticism is carried further in the parable of the vineyard. Its theme is a summary of the treatment of God's prophets all down the history of the Jewish nation—a subject constantly occupying His mind now ; and its main purpose is to convey a clear warning that their present course of action was leading the nation straight to disaster. A man plants a vineyard, and lets it out to husbandmen while he goes away (cf. Isa. v, 1). At vintage time he sends "servants" to collect the fruit, but the husbandmen beat one and stone another, and kill a third, and drive the rest away. Messenger after messenger is treated thus. At last the owner sends his own son : "He had still one person left to send, his 'beloved son' ; and him he sent last of all to them thinking that they would at least respect his son. But the husbandmen said among themselves : This is the heir ; come, let us kill him and the vineyard shall be our own. And so they took him and killed him and threw his body out of the vineyard. What is the owner of the vineyard to do ? He will come and slay those husbandmen and give the vineyard to others. And when they heard it they said : 'May God forbid !' But Jesus looked at them and said : What then is the meaning of the old words, 'The very stone which the builders rejected has become the chief corner stone ; this is God's doing' ?" (Ps. cxviii, 22-23). There are two note-

worthy facts in this famous parable. The first is Jesus' public and challenging claim to be more than one of the prophets, to stand in a unique relationship to God. The owner sends his "servants" and then, last of all, his "son," his "beloved son."<sup>1</sup> Moreover the quotation from the psalm and its Messianic reference were familiar to Jesus' hearers, and the context made it plain that He was applying it to Himself. The second is Jesus' public statement that He is fully aware of their intention to kill Him. The religious leaders realise at once that this parable was directed against them: "They would have liked to arrest him that very hour; but they were afraid of the crowds, so they left Him and went away" (Mark xii, 1-12; Luke xx, 9-18). The leaders had now determined on Jesus' death. But His popularity still presented an insuperable obstacle to open arrest. His popularity must therefore be the crucial point of attack; and it is on this that His enemies proceed to concentrate all their efforts. "And they sent to Him some Pharisees with men of Herod's party, to entrap Him" (Mark xii, 13). Luke explains that they wanted to get hold of some charge on which they could hand Him over to the Roman Governor for punishment. (Luke xx, 20). Their first attempt is cunningly conceived and cunningly worded. They begin with flattery: "Master (Rabbi,) we know that your words and your teaching are the honest truth, uninfluenced by regard for men's position or rank. Tell us then, is it right to pay the tax to Cæsar or not?" This tax (as we have seen) was extremely unpopular, and its imposition had been followed by serious insurrections in Galilee, where Jesus'

<sup>1</sup> Cf. pp. 109-10 *supra*, and Matt. xxvii, 43.

main supporters came from<sup>1</sup>. They therefore hoped to catch Jesus in a dilemma. For if He said that they ought to pay the tax His popularity would be fatally injured; the odium of anti-national sentiments would ruin it more quickly than anything else. If, however, He publicly said that they ought not to pay the tax, they would have clear evidence of His having spoken treason against the Government, and the Herodians who had accompanied them were waiting there to bear witness to the fact. He could then be quietly handed over to the political authorities to be dealt with. Jesus "saw through this hypocrisy"; and His answer well illustrates His advice to the disciples to "unite the wisdom of the serpent with the gentleness of the dove" (Matt. x, 16). His sincerity and sense of fact confound His crooked-minded adversaries. "Bring me a penny," He says, and when they have brought it: "Whose image and title does it bear?" They have to admit that the image and title are Cæsar's. "Then give back to Cæsar what admittedly belongs to him—and to God what belongs of right to Him." They were themselves using the Roman currency, a practical admission that they were taking advantage of the Roman civilisation and the protection and benefits of Roman rule; if so it was only fair that they should be prepared to pay for the privilege in the Roman coin which they made use of. The fact was obvious and it gave no "handle" against Him. Moreover, the reminder was just. The Jews had themselves petitioned that Judea should be made a Roman province; and the benefits of Roman administration were real. They were astonished and left Him

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Acts v, 37. Josephus, *Antiquities*, xviii, 1 f.

(Mark xii, 13-17 ; Luke xx, 20-26). The Sadducees next approached Him with a much-discussed problem regarding the resurrection of the dead. (The Sadducees did not believe in the immortality of the soul. The Resurrection was to the Jews an aspect of the Messianic hope, a hope which the Sadducees did not share.) Apparently they hoped that if they could get Him into difficulties with statements in the Torah, He would be discredited in the eyes of the orthodox. Moses had ordered that if a man died childless his brother should marry the widow in order that the family might not die out ; there was one woman who married seven brothers in succession ; whose wife would she be in the next world ? Their argument was presumably that belief in immortality involved, under the Mosaic law, belief in polygamy. As Jesus believed in immortality, He would have either to admit polygamy or to deny the validity of the Law. Jesus replies at once that their view was crudely materialistic ; there is no marriage "in heaven" —it is a spiritual condition. And then He goes to the root of the whole question of immortality. God refers to Himself in the Mosaic history as "the God of Abraham of Isaac and of Jacob" (cf. Exod. iii, 6 ; cf. Isa. xli, 8). How could He speak of Himself as their friend after their death if they had long ago ceased to exist altogether ? Jesus thus confronts them with their own weapon—a saying which they themselves accepted as an inspired Word of God about some of their greatest forefathers. "You are in error," He concludes, "because you do not understand either the Scriptures (the story of God's dealings with the race) or the power of God (which is certainly great enough to



save His friends from destruction)" (Mark xii, 18-27). A scholar of the Law, who has been struck with Jesus' replies, now asks Him a far more serious and interesting "moot question": Which is the chief of the commandments? Jesus has no hesitation in replying. He goes back, as so often, to the great interpretation of Jewish history in Deuteronomy and puts side by side its two supreme commands: Love of God and Love of fellow men.<sup>1</sup> "After this (says the recorder) no one dared to ask Him any more questions" (Mark xii, 28-34).

Jesus now takes advantage of the presence of a large crowd to raise the question of a political Messiah. What does the statement that the Messiah is "the Son of David" mean? In one of the accepted messianic prophecies David himself speaks of the Messiah as "my Lord" (Ps. cx, 1). If the Messiah is David's "Lord," how can he be a mere descendant of his in the royal line—a mere political and national ruler? The expression implies that he must be David's spiritual superior and his kingdom one of spiritual, not "temporal," power (Mark xii, 35-37). The argument was clearly directed against the inconsistency of those who accepted such references as messianic and yet still clung to a belief in a political Messiah, and, as Jesus Himself was claiming Messiahship, it was a public repudiation of such Messiahship. To this they had no answer (Matt. xxii, 46). The only result, then, of the attempt on the part of Jesus' enemies to undermine his popularity was to enhance His reputation and lessen their own. "The common people," says Mark, "were delighted" (Mark xii, 37).

<sup>1</sup> Matt. puts this in the mouth of Jesus; Mark, in the mouth of the scribe.

Shortly after this Jesus issues another challenge—a public condemnation of the spirit of contemporary Pharisaism. The religion of self-interest was irreconcilable with the religion of self-forgetful Love which Jesus preached as the truth; and it was an insidious spirit, a “leaven” as He calls it elsewhere, against which men needed always to be on their guard, especially when it came to them disguised under the cloak of sanctity. And, therefore, now that He is so soon to die and His voice be silenced, He exposes it to a searching criticism (Mark xii, 38-40; Luke xx, 45-47; Matt, xxiii, 1 f.; cf. Matt. vi, 1-8).

As Jesus watched them plotting His death, He was led to reflect once more on the tragic story of His race. These men were the true sons of their forefathers who had persecuted the prophets all down their history. And all the guilt was gathering itself to a head in His generation; by slaying God’s “Son” they would crown the terrible work (Matt. xxiii, 29-39). He was therefore moved to give them a final warning that they were rejecting God’s supreme appeal and sealing their own fate. A great prince gives a marriage feast in honour of his “son,” and invites all the men of social importance in the city as guests. “But they all with one consent begged to be excused.” The king in indignation gathers all the cripples and destitute to take their places, declaring that “not one of those first invited shall taste of my banquet” (Luke xiv, 15-24; Matt. xxii, 1-10). Matthew gives the story a significant ending. There was one guest who accepted, but insulted his master’s hospitality by refusing to wear “a wedding garment” (Matt. xxii, 11-14). This may have been intended as a

veiled warning to one of the disciples themselves—perhaps the enemies of Jesus were already intriguing with Judas to betray his Master to them. If Jesus was to be put out of the way at all it was clearly necessary for them to find some such means of arresting Him in a safe and quiet spot when He was alone at night. Secrecy and dispatch were their most effective weapons; for if the religious leaders could show the people their “deliverer” an already condemned and dying criminal (particularly if He were condemned and guarded by the Roman authorities)—could show them His “failure” in short, as an accomplished fact—His prestige would be gone, and they would no longer be concerned to defend or avenge Him. But since Jesus was usually in Jerusalem during the day time only, they required some trusted friend, intimately acquainted with His habits and plans, to give them immediate information if a suitable opportunity to seize Him presented itself. Whether Judas was merely mercenary or whether he had other reasons for his action is not plain. His subsequent behaviour suggests at least that greed was not his only or his chief motive. Perhaps he was a fanatical nationalist who believed that Jesus could fulfil the role of a “Maccabean” hero. If so, Jesus’ persistent refusal to appeal to force must have filled Judas with despair, and he may have hoped that if Jesus was driven against the wall he would have to fight. At the same time Judas could get a reward from the Jewish leaders, and so satisfy his avarice and his ambition at one stroke (cf. John xii, 3-6, with Mark xiv, 10-11). Whatever his motive, he eventually agreed to betray Jesus.

One day, as Jesus leaves the city, the disciples

call attention to the new Temple buildings<sup>1</sup> in evident admiration. Jesus, whose thoughts are full of the coming calamity which He foresees, replies that the whole building will soon be razed to the ground (Mark xiii, 1-2). On His return, as He sits on the slopes of Olivet gazing at the city spread out below Him, the disciples most intimate with Him come to Him "privately" and ask for an explanation. Their question concerned only the destruction of Jerusalem (Mark xiii, 2-4), but the long discourse that follows in the narrative<sup>2</sup> refers mainly to the "coming" of the Messiah (*parousia*). For this and other reasons<sup>3</sup> most modern scholars regard "the last discourse" as a compilation. In view of the mistaken attitude of the disciples towards Messiahship and the keen expectation in the early Church of a speedy return of Christ (e.g., 1 Thess. i, 10; iv, 16-17; 1 Peter iv, 7; 2 Peter iii, 3-14; Rev. xxii, 20), it is not surprising that Jesus' language should have been misunderstood. It is possible, however, to distinguish certain lines of thought which are consistent with Jesus' attitude as hitherto interpreted and which would at the same time account for these misunderstandings.<sup>4</sup>

(vii) *The Last Discourse.*

As we have already seen,<sup>5</sup> Jesus fully realised the significance of the smouldering discontent, and the

<sup>1</sup> Described by Josephus, *Wars*, v.

<sup>2</sup> Mark xiii; Matt. xxiv; Luke xxi, 5 f. Cf. Luke xii, 1-12; xvii, 20-31; Matt. x, 17-22.

<sup>3</sup> See A. E. J. Rawlinson, *Mark*, 177-82, or Streeter, *Studies in the Synoptic Problem*, pp. 179-83.

<sup>4</sup> Once again what follows is inference only.

<sup>5</sup> E.g., pp. 63-4 *supra*.

half political, half religious agitation that were later to infect even the Pharisaic party and at last to break out in open revolt and lead to the destruction of Jerusalem. Moreover, the rejection of spiritual ideals of greatness and the adoption of worldly methods had invariably led Israel to political disaster in the past, and Jerusalem had been completely demolished by a power less firmly established than Rome. Thus if the nation continued on its present course it was bound to provoke a conflict with Rome. The Jews would have no chance in the arena of war against such an adversary; and thus there could only be one end to the struggle. Nor did there appear to be any hope that the nation would abandon its present course. By the time that Jesus reached Jerusalem on His last journey this conviction of coming disaster had become so settled in His mind that He actually wept over it as a doomed city, declaring publicly that it would soon be an utter ruin (Luke xix, 42-44). There is thus no reason to doubt that Jesus foresaw the fall of Jerusalem.

And nothing could be more natural than that the fall of Jerusalem should have been connected in Jesus' mind with the hope of the triumph of "the Kingdom." For this hope was founded on experience. The martyrdom of the great prophets followed by the earlier fall of Jerusalem had actually brought about a great national "repentance"; and in the subsequent revival of genuine religion their message had been accepted and incorporated in the sacred records. Might not the fall of Jerusalem again produce a similar revival,<sup>1</sup> in which the

<sup>1</sup> The fall was followed by a revival of the best traditions of Pharisaism and the disappearance of the Sadducees.

old prophetic hope of "the Remnant" who were to be restored as "Zion redeemed" would be at last fulfilled? And in such a revival might not Jesus' followers form the nucleus of a new "Society" and find the nation at length willing to accept His message as the word of God, and recognise Him as God's "beloved Son"? Then the Gospel might conquer the world. It is hardly credible that with His profound patriotism and His knowledge of Jewish history Jesus should not have entertained such a hope, and with it lightened His own way to persecution and martyrdom (cf. Mark xiii, 9-13). "Love hopeth all things."

But the fall of Jerusalem could not in itself be the coming of the Kingdom. Jesus came to found a spiritual Kingdom; and His own conception of it is indicated clearly in His reply to the Pharisees: "And being asked by the Pharisees when the Kingdom of God was coming he replied: The Kingdom of God will not come in such a way that it can be visibly observed; nor will men be able to say 'Look here! Look there!' For observe, the Kingdom of God is within you." There will be no visible signs of its triumph, no flag, no army of occupation, no triumphant procession with the "pride, pomp and panoply" of war, at which spectators may point exclaiming "Look at this! Look at that!" It is not spectacular at all. The Kingdom is "within," an invisible spiritual kingdom, the reign of God over "the heart and mind and soul" (Luke xvii, 20-23). The same thought is repeated in the present context: "The time will come when you will long to see one of 'the days' of the Messiah; but you will not see it. And if they point to spectacular events and say 'Look! Look!'

do not pay any attention." For the great coming will be "like the lightning"—a silent universal illumination (Matt. xxiv, 24-28 ; cf. Luke xvii, 24). This conception follows inevitably from Jesus' conception of God, Whose Kingdom is the triumph of Love, and cannot be introduced by force but only by the self-revelation of God.

But if Jesus Himself was the Revealer and Representative of God through Whom the Kingdom was to be established on earth, His coming was the *inauguration* of the Kingdom ; Jesus had at last revealed God as He is, and the spirit and power of the Kingdom were at work in His own person. And of this first coming His death was to be the climax. As He Himself expressed it, that death was a fulfilment of the vision of the Son of Man coming "in power and great glory" to "judge mankind" and establish the Kingdom.<sup>1</sup> And this claim, too, follows directly from His conception of God. His death was, in the first place, the divine act which at last revealed in all its splendour the greatness of God ; for if God is Love what more perfect revelation could be given to man of the Divine Spirit in His "power and glory" than Jesus' deliberate choice of death for the sake of Love as the consummation of a life lived in the spirit of Love ? It was therefore the final act in the founding of the Kingdom. And was it any less truly a Divine Judgment ? Jesus Himself supplies the answer. When the religious leaders saw Love and pity actively at work before their eyes and deliberately rejected them as evil, He warned them that in thus rejecting Love they were passing judgment on themselves and shutting themselves out from

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Acts viii, 56.

God's presence.<sup>1</sup> Jesus' whole life, but above all the death which He had now chosen, was the supreme manifestation in visible form of this same Divine Love in action ; and therefore it was at the same time the supreme challenge to the conscience and understanding of men. In judging Jesus, men were thus passing judgment on themselves. But if the life and death of Jesus were the great revelation of God, the decision to which it compelled men was a decision to accept or reject the Spirit of God ; and therefore in rejecting Jesus they were rejecting God and thereby condemning themselves. What other judgment could there be ? For if God is Love His judgment cannot consist in the rejection of men by God ; it can only be this rejection of God by men. Men's judgment of Jesus is therefore God's judgment of men. The crucifixion of Jesus also revealed, as never before or since, what men's weakness and selfishness inevitably does to all that is noblest and most lovable in human life. And thus the act that above all others lit up the glory and the power of the Divine Love was also a unique revelation of the innermost nature of evil. The death of Jesus was therefore at once a supreme revelation of God and a great divine judgment of men. (cf. John iii, 16-19).

But though the Kingdom was thus established, the world was not yet won. And Jesus certainly looked beyond His death to another "Coming": "As the lightning when it shines from pole to pole, so shall the Son of Man be on the Day ; but first He must suffer and die" (Luke xvii, 24-25 ; Matt. xxiv, 27 ; cf. Luke xix, 12 ; Matt. xxv, 19). The ultimate Divine purpose was that the Kingdom should be revealed to all mankind in order that

<sup>1</sup> p. 131 *supra*.



they might enter it, and the Kingdom would only be fully come when this was an accomplished fact. Jesus' death was only the culmination of the first act in the working out of this purpose. But death could have no power to change His relationship to God; He would "rise again," and continue His work as Messiah (see p. 68 *supra*; cf. Mark xii, 18-27, with Acts iii, 13; v, 30-32, etc.). Holding such a faith, Jesus must surely have looked forward confidently to a time when His message would at last be made known to the world, and the meaning of His Messiahship realised by men. Unless God was to fail in His purpose, the day must come when the earth would be "full of the glory of God as the waters cover the sea"; His Kingdom would then be fully come because His will would be done on earth as it is in Heaven. This would be "the Day of the Son of Man" when His revelation would lighten men "from one end of heaven to the other," and all the ancient hopes would be transcendently fulfilled. To such a final "coming" Jesus undoubtedly looked forward. But when it would be no one knew save God alone (Mark xiii, 32).

Jesus makes no attempt to define the symbolism more closely. He uses it, as His habit is, imaginatively, not literally and prosaically. But if the interpretation given above is correct, the essential truth which Jesus saw in it may be summarised as follows. God is the great Reality. All power ultimately lies in His hands and proceeds from Him. But because God is the God of both Love and righteousness, He desires above all things that men should love and trust Him as His sons. And therefore He will not compel men. The Kingdom must await man's response. That response is summed up

in the word "faith." To have faith is to respond in the spirit of sonship to God's Fatherhood ; it is man's giving of the whole of himself to God in absolute loyalty and devotion and trust. When and in so far as this faith is given, God's power is set free in the service of man and for the fulfilment of God's purposes. But how was man's faith to be won and the Kingdom made a reality ? The Jews answered, by revelation and by judgment. In this answer Jesus discerned profound truth. Jesus set the seal to the belief that God reveals Himself to man. But because God seeks man's free allegiance, men are free to reject God's revelation. But if God is the source of all life and truth, to reject God is to alienate oneself from the source of all good. God cannot be untrue to Himself ; His Day is not the Day of God's wrath and vengeance, but the Day of Love. But for that very reason it is the Day of man's choice ; and the more clearly the truth is revealed the more decisive and pregnant must the rejection be. This is the Judgment. To accept God is eternal life ; to reject Him is death. All down history the Jews had traced such judgments : the Flood, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the Exile ; these were all catastrophes in which the consequences of rejecting God and surrendering to the influence of evil were gathered to a climax and made manifest to the world. Since in Jesus God was revealed perfectly in terms of human life, the judgment was here supremely manifest and the consequences of rejection most disastrous. The catastrophe in which this would be made plain was the fall of Jerusalem. And so throughout history the same law runs. Every new presentation of God's truth is a new call for decision and therefore

a new judgment. The clearer the revelation, the more compelling is the choice. But though in Jesus' perfect sonship God was at last revealed in perfection (cf. Luke x, 21-24) and His power made fully available in the service of righteousness and Love (cf. Luke xi, 20), this revelation was in one man and to one nation. The more fully the truth of God is presented to all mankind, the more world-wide will the crisis be (cf. Mark xiii, 10). On the one hand, the more men respond to that revelation the more will God's power be released and His Kingdom become a reality on earth. On the other hand, the more real and visible the Kingdom becomes the more deliberate will the choice be and the more decisive the consequences of the choice, until at length the world is decisively divided on the great issue. This is the Great Judgment (Matt. xxv, 31-46).

(viii) *The End.*

The feast of unleavened bread was now close at hand and a definite plot was set on foot to have Jesus arrested secretly while the governor was in Jerusalem, and put to death ; but " not during the feast itself " lest there should be a riot among the people who flocked to Jerusalem from the North (where Jesus' adherents mainly came from) (Mark xiv, 1, 2).

The priests had found in Judas the tool they were seeking. He consents to accept a bribe and deliver Jesus into their hands " when circumstances should be favourable " (Mark xiv, 10-11) ; that is, as Luke explains, " in the absence of the people " (Luke xxii, 6). Jesus is evidently aware of the plot ; but as He is now ready He makes no attempt

to evade it. But before giving up His public teaching He determines to make a final and public identification of Himself with the Representative of God from Heaven, and in that setting to sum up the essence of His revelation in its simplest form. He returns to the imagery of the Last Judgment, so recently discussed in private with His four friends. His followers must have listened with rapt attention. The Son of Man had long been familiar to them as His self-chosen title; it was familiar also as the title of the supernatural Judge. Now at last Jesus publicly declares them to be one and the same. It was He Who would sit as King on the throne of glory revealing the eternal law by which God judged mankind (Matt. xxv, 31-46).

Jesus had been staying at Bethany with Lazarus and his sisters. On the night before the last supper Mary, who has heard Jesus speak of His approaching death, unable to express her sorrow and love in words, comes in while He sits at supper and pours over His head a jar of the costly ointment used for embalming, "in preparation for His burial." It was an act of delicate understanding and sympathy that went straight to Jesus' heart. The disciples grumble at the "senseless extravagance." But Jesus takes her part. The act revealed a spirit kindred to His own. And who shall say what that silent tribute of love meant to Him amid the loneliness and misunderstanding with which He was surrounded? He tells them that whenever His gospel of Love is preached anywhere in the world this act of hers should be told as an example of it, "in memory of her love." They did not forget. (Mark xiv, 3-9; John xii, 1-8).

The crisis had now come. Jesus takes elaborate

precautions against being arrested until after the evening meal.<sup>1</sup> He is keenly anxious to eat it alone with His chosen friends. But He will be in Jerusalem after dark, thus affording the very opportunity for which Judas and the religious leaders are waiting. He therefore makes private arrangements beforehand with a friend, and then sends two of His disciples on the day in question with such general instructions as will enable them to find the man who is to show them the house, and will yet offer no clue to Judas who is standing by listening. "He sent two of His disciples with these instructions: Go into the city and you will there meet a man carrying a pot of water; follow him, and when he goes into a house enter after him and say, The Master asks you to show us the guest-chamber where He is to eat the passover with His disciples; he will show you a large upper room, furnished as required; get the meal ready for us there" (Mark xiv, 13-15). In the evening Jesus enters the city with the Twelve. As the meal commences Jesus, seeing Judas sharing the dish with Him, warns the disciples of His coming betrayal; He felt it deeply that it should be one of His intimate friends from whom the blow came: "In very truth I assure you that one of you is going to betray me—one of you who are sharing the meal with me." They listen with surprise and grief (Mark xiv, 18-21). While they are eating, Jesus takes the bread and distributes it to each of them with the words: "This is my body which is being broken for you; do this in memory of me"; then He passes them the cup: "All of you take

<sup>1</sup> It is now generally agreed that the fourth Gospel is right in not making this the Passover meal.

this and drink of it." With the second cup<sup>1</sup> He adds that it symbolises the new relationship between God and man, to be sealed by His blood<sup>2</sup>: the relationship of mutual Love (1 Cor. xi, 23-25; Luke xxii, 17-20; Mark xiv, 22-25). After singing the passover hymn they leave the city. "And he took them, as his custom was,<sup>3</sup> to the hill of Olives" (Mark xiv, 26; Luke xxii, 39). Meanwhile Judas has quietly slipped away. He now knows where Jesus is going; and no doubt he is alarmed at finding that his treachery is discovered. Unless he is to fail, he must act at once. . . . On the way out of the city, Jesus reveals how the failure of the disciples to understand Him weighs on His mind. He knows that when they see Him deliberately allowing Himself to be arrested and refusing to appeal to force, their courage will forsake them and they will desert Him. But even so His own courage does not falter. His faith is set on the old prophetic hope that out of disaster and death would spring a new vision of God for the world. "I shall be the cause of you falling, every one of you, to-night: it will be as Zechariah foretold. But after my resurrection I will come back and lead you." Peter, impulsive as ever, breaks out into indignant denial: "Though everyone else fails you, I never will." "Simon, Simon," comes the answer, "the tempter has sought the opportunity to test your character as they sift wheat; but I have been praying for you, that your faith may not fail." Peter, deeply moved, cries with passionate conviction: "Even though I have to die with you

<sup>1</sup> Luke only.

<sup>2</sup> The "old Covenant" was under the "Law"; the new is under the "Gospel" which supersedes it.

<sup>3</sup> This explains how Judas knew where Jesus was going.

I will never desert you." "Why, Peter," says Jesus, sadly, "before next cock-crow you will have denied that you even know me." But Peter continues to protest loudly, and the others echo his assurance (Mark xiv, 27-31; Luke xxii, 31-34). Jesus then warns the disciples that the days of His popularity are over. When He sent them out on the "mission" without money or food they had been hospitably received everywhere because of that popularity; but now, when He was killed and discredited, those who professed friendship for Him would meet with a very different reception. "Now if anyone has any money let him take it with him, and food as well." There would be no welcome for the followers of a public failure. On the contrary they would be bitterly attacked: "If any one of you has no sword he had better sell his coat and buy one; for I warn you that the old prophecy of Isaiah 'he was classed among the criminals' is going to be realised in My person." The disciples, as usual, take His words about buying a sword quite literally: can He be going to appeal to force and resist after all? "Master," they say eagerly, "here are two swords." "It is enough!" is the brief ironical answer (Luke xxii, 35-38).

THE GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE.—They reach the garden of Gethsemane. Here Jesus leaves the eight disciples, asking them to wait while He goes on to pray. Peter and James and John accompany Him a little further. They see that He is moved to the depths of His soul. All His vitality and manhood; all the wonder and beauty, the interest and joy of life; the appeal of friendship; His passionate desire to make men see

God and life with His eyes and so bring them healing and happiness; the heart-breaking risk that His death might be in vain and His message lost; the coming outburst of triumphant hatred—all these press upon Him and cry out against the sacrifice that He is making. He is crushed with a sense of appalling calamity, a sadness too great for human nature to bear (Mark xiv, 33-34, Greek text). He asks the three disciples to keep awake and then goes a stone's throw away and falls on His knees and prays: "Abba, my Father, all things are possible to Thee; take this cup from my lips. And yet Thy will not mine be done." In His loneliness He feels the need of human sympathy and goes back to His friends. They are asleep. "What, Simon," he says, "asleep! Then you could not keep awake with me even for an hour? Wake and pray lest you too enter on your time of trial." He returns and prays again: "My Father, if this cup cannot pass without my drinking it, Thy will be done." His prayer brings Him some comfort. But soon the struggle renews itself in all its intensity; and as they watch Him in the moonlight the drops of sweat falling from His forehead looked like blood dripping from a wound (Luke xxii, 41-45). But the strain has exhausted the disciples and they are once more overcome with drowsiness. And so when the sense of loneliness again becomes oppressive and Jesus returns to them for companionship, He finds them asleep once more. He leaves them a third time and goes back to pray the same prayer. . . . But now He sees the gleam of torches and hears the sound of men approaching. He knows that the crisis has come and that Judas has led His enemies to this lonely spot where He



can be safely arrested under cover of darkness. He therefore goes back to His disciples and wakes them: "You will have time enough after this to sleep and rest yourselves," He tells them; "all is over; the hour has come at last and the Son of Man is betrayed. Rise and let us go; for see, the traitor is here" (Mark xiv, 32-42; Luke xxii, 39-46; Matt. xxvi, 36-46). As He speaks they see a band of men emerging with swords and sticks and torches, "sent by the Chief Priests and Scribes and Elders," and at their head Judas. With cynical mockery Judas has offered to show them who Jesus is by kissing Him. One of the disciples, perhaps remembering Jesus' words, draws a sword to defend Him; but Jesus checks him at once (Matt. xxvi, 52). Then He turns to the partisans of the religious leaders who have come to arrest Him: "Have you come out to arrest me as if I were a bandit,<sup>1</sup> armed with swords and bludgeons? I was there every day teaching publicly in the Temple and you never attempted to seize me; but this is your opportunity, the hour given over to darkness" (Luke xxii, 52-53). Seeing that Jesus will not allow them to appeal to force and that He intends to let Himself be arrested without a struggle, the disciples are unnerved; to wait there will mean arrest, probably death. Panic seizes them when they see the men move forward to take Jesus; "and they all deserted him and fled"—so hurriedly that one of them leaves his cloth behind and runs away naked (Mark xiv, 50-52).

THE TRIAL AND CRUCIFIXION.—Jesus is first taken to the house of the High Priest, where

<sup>1</sup> See p. 213.

Annas and Caiaphas are anxiously awaiting the result of Judas' treachery (Luke xxii, 54). On His arrival they hastily examine the evidence that has been collected : first, for a charge of blasphemy, in order to secure a unanimous verdict in the Sanhedrin ; and secondly for a charge of high treason, in order to secure Jesus' condemnation to death by the Roman governor. For not only had they no power to execute a sentence of death,<sup>1</sup> but in view of Jesus' popularity it was of great importance to them that He should be condemned by the governor and his execution carried out by Roman soldiers. Witnesses collected in haste came forward with a variety of charges, but their statements were neither consistent nor convincing. All through this examination Jesus maintained a resolute silence. There can be no doubt at all that He did this deliberately, in order to make sure that the real matter at stake was not confused by irrelevant side issues. It was as Messiah that He was going to die, and everything depended on the disciples' realising it. It was for this that He had deliberately "set His face" to go to Jerusalem under the astonished eyes of His disciples, telling them again and again that He was going to His death ; for this that He made His triumphal entry into Jerusalem "riding on an ass" as the "Son of David" ; for this that He threw down His challenge to the religious world at Jerusalem ; and it is on this issue and no other that He is now determined to compel them to decide His fate. And so He meets every question and every charge with unbroken silence, until at last the High Priest is driven to brush aside all the

<sup>1</sup> According to the Fourth Gospel. But the evidence is conflicting.

irrelevancies and put the real question in the plainest words : " And the High Priest stood up and said to Jesus : Are you going to make no reply ? What of all this evidence that is being given against you ? But Jesus maintained absolute silence. Then the High Priest said to Him : I put you on your oath. In the name of the Living God tell us, are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed ? And Jesus answered : Yes, I am ; and you are just about to witness ' the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power and coming in the clouds of Heaven.' " If Jesus had hitherto been silent, as soon as the High Priest has challenged Him on the real issue His answer is unhesitating (Mark xiv, 53-65). Jesus had now succeeded at least in this, that He had chosen the ground and made clear the issue on which He was to be condemned and die. And at least one of the Twelve may have heard this fearless claim. For Peter, as soon as he realised that he was not being pursued, had checked his panic and stopped to watch the band as they moved away with Jesus. Then, drawn by the irresistible attraction of the Master's personality, he had followed at a safe distance and entered the courtyard. It was cold, and the partisans of the priests lit a fire. Peter drew close and was warming himself before it (Mark xiv, 54). As he sat there with the firelight playing on his face, one of the maids in the High Priest's service came out and caught sight of him. She stops to look at him curiously, and then says : " You, too, were one of the followers of this Jesus of Nazareth." Peter begins to take fright again : " I do not know the man," he exclaims, and then hastily quits the fire and takes shelter in the friendly shadow of the porch. But the maid

follows him and again tells the bystanders "he is one of them." "No, I am not," Peter exclaims again; but the bystanders begin to stare at him and listen with interest. Then one of them says, "This man is certainly of their party; his accent proves that he is a Galilean." Peter, now thoroughly alarmed, begins "to curse and swear" that he "does not know the man." As he raises his voice in excitement a cock crows, and Jesus turns round and looks him full in the face. At once there flashes into Peter's mind the warning "before next cock-crow you will have disowned me." So it has come true after all! Peter shrinks from his Master's eyes and goes out to "weep bitterly" (Mark xiv, 66-72; Matt. xxvi, 69-75; Luke xxii, 56-62). Meanwhile the enemies of Jesus vent their long suppressed hatred upon Him. They spit on His face and strike Him; then they cover His eyes and sneer at "the prophet," hitting Him with the taunt: "Now tell us, prophet, who was it who struck you?" (Mark xiv, 65; Matt. xxvi, 67-68). As soon as day breaks and the whole Sanhedrin is collected, a formal trial is held (Mark xv, 1; Luke xxii, 66-71). Jesus was again asked<sup>1</sup> before the full Sanhedrin whether He was the Messiah, and again He answered "Yes." He was then formally condemned to death (Luke xxiv, 66-71). The next step was to bind Him and carry Him before Pilate, where the real trial commences. And here once more it is obvious that Jesus is concerned only to make the issue unmistakable. His accusers, having no honest evidence to prove that Jesus is a rebel against the Roman government, deliberately falsify His statements on the tribute question in

<sup>1</sup> Luke only.

order to charge Him with a definite offence of treason: "We have found this man leading the people astray and telling them not to pay tribute to Cæsar; besides, He claims to be the Messiah—that is a king—himself" (Luke xxiii, 2). "Are you the King of the Jews?" asks Pilate, turning to Jesus with no little amusement. But Jesus, unconcerned at Pilate's ironies, answers briefly: "Yes, I am"<sup>1</sup>; and then relapses into silence. The Chief Priests and Elders bring many other charges against Jesus before the governor, but they are irrelevant to His purpose and He makes no answer. "Have you nothing to say?" Pilate asks at last in surprise; "Look at all these charges they are bringing against you." But Jesus evidently has nothing more to say: "He made no further answer to anything, not a single word," to Pilate's increasing astonishment (Mark xv, 1-5; Matt. xxvii, 14). Pilate watches Jesus, and then looks at the Chief Priests and the others who have arrested Him. He listens probably with no little amusement to these aristocrats of a proud and fanatical nation accusing one of their own race of high treason against the Roman ruler, and shrewdly concludes that they have "delivered Jesus to him out of personal malice" (Mark xv, 9). "I find no guilt in this man," he says abruptly. But they press their charges with great vehemence. It would have been disastrous for them to have arrested the popular Jesus, and then have failed to secure His death; and they are determined at any cost to secure His conviction and the extreme penalty. "He is

<sup>1</sup> The Greek could possibly mean "yes, in a sense I am"; that is, qualified assent. But see Matt. xxvi, 25. It probably means "(It is as) you say."

rousing up the people with his teaching," they say excitedly, "right from Galilee down to Jerusalem and all over Judea" (Luke xxiii, 2-5). Pilate now sees a way out of the difficulty.<sup>1</sup> If the man is a Galilean, Herod can deal with Him; and he had powers of life and death. Moreover, had not Herod expressed a desire to see Jesus? (Luke ix, 9). So to Herod Pilate sends Him. "And Herod was extremely pleased. He had long been anxious to see Jesus; for he had heard about Him, and hoped to see some miracle done by Him. He asked Him many questions, while the Chief Priests and Scribes stood by denouncing Him passionately. But Jesus said not a word in reply to them." Nevertheless He again achieved His purpose; for not only did Herod know the charge on which Jesus had been sent to him, but he publicly ridiculed it. Face to face with Jesus, he too saw at once that there could be no evil in such a man and nothing to be feared from Him; for though he had intended to kill Him on the strength of the rumours he had been hearing, and though this was an ideal opportunity to carry out his purpose, after watching Jesus he changes his mind and does not condemn Him, in spite of the vehement protests of the priests; on the contrary he treats the whole accusation with mockery: "Herod and his men dressed Jesus in the robes of a king and sent Him back to Pilate" (Luke xxiii, 1-11). Pilate then addresses Jesus' accusers again: "You have brought this man to me as a preacher of sedition; I have examined him in front of you and found him guiltless of your charges; so too has Herod, for he has sent him back to me without condemning him. I therefore intend

<sup>1</sup> Luke only.

to scourge him and let him go " (Luke xxiii, 13-16). Meanwhile, however, an interruption occurs (Mark xv, 6-11). It was the custom for the Roman governor to release one prisoner at the feast, chosen by the people themselves, as an act of grace. The city mob has collected, and now comes to demand of Pilate that he should concede the usual favour. With cynical humour Pilate seizes the opportunity to suggest to them that he should release Jesus. He knew that Jesus was popular and he was anxious to save Him from the priests, while they were even more determined not to let him do so; according to the Fourth Gospel, they went to the length of uttering a scarcely veiled threat to accuse Pilate of disloyalty before the Roman Emperor if he did not condemn Jesus. But if Jesus were released at the demand of the crowd, Pilate could argue that even if the man was guilty of treason he could not refuse the crowd its rights. The Jewish leaders would thus be baulked of their purpose while Pilate would have the satisfaction of having humoured the people by the release of a harmless man whom he himself was anxious to set free! But the mob which had gathered was not composed of people who were concerned to befriend Jesus. It was rather a city mob of the type familiar to students of city life, particularly under the Roman empire; and the Jerusalem mob was notoriously violent and fanatical. It so happened that there was at the moment lying in prison on a charge of insurrection a man after their own heart, one Barabbas, an adventurer of the type of Theudas—a popular leader who had not refused to appeal to force: "There had been an insurrection resulting in loss of life; Barabbas

was one of the prisoners" (Mark xv, 7). Josephus<sup>1</sup> has much to say of these local insurrectionary leaders and of their popularity. When therefore Pilate meets their demand by bringing Jesus forward clothed in Herod's mock royal robes, and asks if he shall release this "King of the Jews," the Priests and Elders with their adherents go about among the crowd whispering the name of their protégé Barabbas, and urging them not to let him be sacrificed. Was he not at that very moment lying in prison and awaiting trial for his proved nationalist sympathies? But as for this Jesus, when had He risked his life for them? Why should they sacrifice Barabbas for such a man? No, let Him die; but at all costs let them save Barabbas! The mob quickly catches the name; their fierce nationalist fanaticism is roused, and the cry swells "Barabbas! give us Barabbas!" "What then am I to do with this King of the Jews here?" asks Pilate. "Crucify him!" shout the adherents of the Priests, and the mob takes up the cry. "Why?" asks Pilate. "What offence has he committed?" But the senseless passions of the mob are roused and they begin clamouring ominously for Jesus' death (Mark xv, 11-14). "So when Pilate saw that all he said was of no avail, but that on the contrary a riot appeared imminent, he called for a basin of water and washed his hands before the mob, saying: 'I am guiltless of the blood of this innocent man. You are responsible; on your heads be it.' And they shouted: His blood be on the head of us and our children" (Matt. xxvii, 24-25).<sup>2</sup> "So Pilate,

<sup>1</sup> He calls them "bandits"; but as he was writing in Rome as a favourite of the Emperor, this is not unnatural.

<sup>2</sup> Only found in Matthew.



in order to appease the mob, released Barabbas to them; and after scourging Jesus he handed Him over to the soldiers to be crucified" (Mark xv, 15). The soldiers, appreciating Herod's grim jest, repeat it on their own account with more realistic detail. "The King of the Jews" is received with imperial honours. "They called together the whole band of the guard; clothing Jesus in the purple,<sup>1</sup> they plaited a crown of thorny twigs and placed it on His head, and put a rod in His hand. This done they came up and saluted Him: 'Ave Cæsar!'—'all hail, O King of the Jews,' and then knelt at His feet. Then they took the stick and struck Him with it, and spat on Him. And when they had finished their jest they took off the purple and dressed Him again in His own clothes and led Him out to crucifixion, after He had been scourged" (Mark xv, 16-20; Matt. xxvii, 27-31). Two criminals, also under condemnation of death, were taken in the same procession. Luke says that a number of sympathisers followed Jesus on the way to Golgotha, including many women. Jesus' words to these women suggest that even then He was preoccupied with the thought of the disaster that was coming on His people: "If they do this when there are still green leaves on the tree, what will they do when it is altogether withered?" (Luke xxiii, 27-31). Jesus sets out carrying His own cross (John xix, 17); but His exhaustion after the terrible strain of the past few weeks, followed by that last night—the supper, Gethsemane, the trials, the brutal sport of Herod and the soldiers, the scourging—makes it clear that He

<sup>1</sup> The "imperial purple" worn only by the Emperor and his viceroys. The rod was given as a sceptre; and the soldiers kneel to take the Roman oath of allegiance (*sacramentum*).

cannot carry it any further. The soldiers, therefore, compel a passer-by to carry it for Him (Mark xv, 21). When they reach the hill Golgotha, the place of execution, they dig pits for the posts to stand in, nail the prisoners to the crosses and raise them. They offer drugged wine to all the condemned men, but Jesus refuses it ; He intends to keep His mind clear to the end (Mark xv, 22, 23). . . . Before nailing Jesus to the Cross the soldiers had fastened over His head the charge on which He was condemned : " Jesus, the King of the Jews." There was a strange and tragic irony in the words. Jesus, after having so deliberately and persistently refused the appeal to force and resisted every attempt to " make Him a king," was condemned and crucified on this very charge of wishing to make Himself a King ; the Man Who had been rejected by the Jewish religious leaders and delivered by them to the soldiers because they, as Jews, had cast Him out, was treated by the soldiers with contemptuous mockery because He was a Jew. And yet both the mockery and the charge nailed above His head had a profound significance. Jesus had completely succeeded in His purpose to have the battle fought out everywhere on the issue which He Himself had chosen. The Sanhedrin condemned Him because of His deliberate claim, in face of their deliberate challenge, that He was the " Messiah." It was the burden of their accusation before Pilate : " He makes Himself out to be Messiah, that is a king." Pilate took up the issue on that ground, and Jesus was publicly tried by the Roman governor on the charge of claiming to be " the King of the Jews." He was publicly mocked first by Herod and then by the soldiers as the would-be " King of the Jews." And finally the

charge nailed above His head on the Cross for all to see was "Jesus, King of the Jews."<sup>1</sup> It was, therefore, impossible for any Jew who heard the story of His trial and death not to realise that Jesus was accused, tried, condemned and put to death for His claim to be Messiah. Above all His own disciples could not possibly fail to understand its significance. And this was exactly what He set out to effect. Whatever His followers now made of His claims, they would at least know that His death was not an unforeseen disaster, but that He deliberately went to meet it, made His challenge, and was condemned, as the Messiah of God. The public taunts of His enemies as He hung on the Cross made it no less evident. . . . "It was nine o'clock when they nailed Him to the Cross. A "bandit" was crucified on either side of Him. The soldiers divided His clothes by lots; then they sat down and watched Him" (Mark xv, 24-27; Matt. xxvii, 35-38). Luke records that as they fastened Him to the Cross Jesus was heard to pray, "Father, forgive them, for they do not understand what they are doing" (Luke xxiii, 34; cf. Acts vii, 60). His enemies, who have no longer any reason to fear the people, come to see Him hanging on the Cross and openly taunt Him; "If you are really 'God's Son'<sup>2</sup> come down from the Cross" (Matt. xxvii, 40-43). "He saved others," they say scornfully, "now let Him save Himself—if He is the Messiah of God, His 'Chosen One'" (Mark xv, 31-32; Luke xxiii, 35, cf. p. 109-10 supra). Mark says that the two criminals "also reproached Jesus"; but Luke has another story. "Are you

<sup>1</sup> In all the three common languages, John says (xix, 20).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Mark i, 11; xii, 6; xiv, 61; Luke iv, 3, 9, etc.

the Messiah ? ” asks one of them who is listening, “ then save yourself—and us ! But the other rebuked Him : Are you still without fear of God, now that we are all about to meet the same fate ? And we have been justly condemned for what we have done ; but this man has done nothing wrong.” And then he turns to Jesus : “ Jesus, remember me when you come into your Kingdom ”<sup>1</sup> (Luke xxiii, 39-43). . . . “ And from twelve o’clock there was darkness over the whole land until three o’clock.” Then Jesus, feeling the agonising thirst of tetanus, whispered “ I am thirsty.” One of the soldiers, hearing the words, ran and offered Him a sponge filled with the medicated wine. His action was misunderstood by the bystanders who had not heard clearly what Jesus said (Mark xv, 35 ; Luke xxiii, 36, corrected in John xix, 28-30). Then, worn out with strain and exhaustion, prostrated by physical agony, forsaken and alone, scoffed at by the enemies who surrounded Him with hatred and bitter mockery, racked with doubt whether His message might not be irretrievably lost and His death in vain, Jesus cried out to God to return and help Him and not leave Him thus forsaken : “ He cried with a loud voice : ‘ My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me ? ’ ” (Ps. xxii, 1 ; Mark xv, 34). Another loud cry, and then, Luke says, a prayer, “ Father, into Thy hands I commit My spirit,” and Jesus is dead (Luke xxiii, 46).

\* \* \* \* \*

So Jesus died ; and what of His purpose ? The disciples had clung tenaciously to their mistaken ideas of Messiahship and of God. Jesus staked

<sup>1</sup> This conversation, unintelligible in ordinary criminals, shows that these “ bandits ” were insurrectionary nationalists.

everything on the faith that if He made it plain to them that He died as Messiah, they would be compelled to think differently of Messiahship and so of God. He trusted to their personal devotion to Him to overcome the shock of His death and the disappointment of their former hopes, and lead them to a new vision of God. He sacrificed His life for that hope, died in shame and agony to make it come true. When the night closed down upon the final scene it left Jesus a dead martyr ; His disciples despairing, bewildered, scattered, their hopes in ruins ; His enemies openly triumphant ; and the women who had loved and followed Him preparing spices to embalm His body before it was finally laid in its last resting place. It seemed as though He had irretrievably failed ; that His superb faith and courage had been lost in the darkness that gathered round His tragic end. But that was not the end. It is a matter of history that a timid band of men, whispering together in fear and secrecy behind barred doors, became men who "turned the world upside down." They did not yet fully understand Him. But His confidence had been justified. It was Jesus, not their own ideals of Messiahship, who survived and grew upon them till He filled their world. And so it came about that when they set themselves to place on record what they remembered, their chief concern was what He was and did and said, whether they understood it all or not. For it is the surprising but simple truth that the Gospels in which are contained all that we know of the personality of Jesus of Nazareth, of the meaning and purpose of His life, and of His revelation of God, were written *after* the death of Jesus on that Friday evening nearly two thousand years ago.

## EPILOGUE

THE portrait of Jesus in the Gospel narratives is not a full or perfect picture of His personality. These narratives consist for the most part of a few fragmentary records. And they are subject to three grave limitations. For we have before us only what the disciples could understand, could remember, and could express in words. The records themselves reveal how persistently they misunderstood Jesus in small things and great. And before they were written down at all, these stories had been passed on for years by word of mouth. When the disciples' memories were at last recorded it was by others who had listened to them ; and these earliest recorders were not men of great learning or skill in words. It may be true that they tended to idealise Him ; but if so it was not in ways that enhance His greatness for us now. But if the picture of the Jesus of Whom we catch a glimpse in the New Testament is His picture as seen through the eyes of men like these and described under such limitations, we are left asking ourselves with increasing wonder what He Himself must have been.

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